

PETER JACKSON:

A NEW ZEALAND FILM AUTEUR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in American Studies

in the University of Canterbury
by Rebecca Grace Robinson

University of Canterbury 1998

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people supported and encouraged the preparation of this thesis. I am deeply grateful for Ken Harris's generous support/supervision philosophy which provided as much space, or feedback, as required; I also benefitted from Jessica Johnston's advice and Howard McNaughton's encouragement and I appreciate the opportunities Roger Horrocks made available for me to 'think out loud' at crucial points. Numerous friends and family members were patient, forgiving and supportive and helped to make the experience a positive one. The University of Canterbury provided finance and other resources.

I would also like to thank Peter Jackson and his kind staff at WingNut (especially Jan Blenkin), and Jesse Vanek without whom many useful insights would have been unavailable.

This thesis is for my friends Tristan and Michael.

ABSTRACT

PETER JACKSON AS NEW ZEALAND AUTEUR

The auteur theory in film seeks to explain the nature of the director's artistic 'signature' and to critically identify in the filmic works his or her stylistic, technical and thematic characteristics. Auteur theory disavows the impact of nationhood and the ways individual subjectivity is ideologically constructed within culture: this thesis asks, what are the cultural implications of a Wellington auteur? The project investigates the problematic nature of film authorship through close textual analysis of Peter Jackson's six feature films. Specifically, this study focuses on the challenges that discourses of post-colonialism and questions of national identity pose to the notion of auteurism, through a critical interrogation of Peter Jackson's unique cultural and filmic vision.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS		i
ABSTRACT		ii
CONTENTS		iii
CHAPTER ONE	Auteurism and national identity	1
CHAPTER TWO	<i>Bad Taste</i>	18
CHAPTER THREE	<i>Meet The Feebles</i>	29
CHAPTER FOUR	<i>Braindead</i>	44
CHAPTER FIVE	<i>Heavenly Creatures</i>	57
CHAPTER SIX	<i>Forgotten Silver</i>	73
CHAPTER SEVEN	<i>The Frighteners</i>	86
CONCLUSION	Peter Jackson as a New Zealand auteur	99
PLOT SYNOPSES		102
FILMOGRAPHY		104
REFERENCES		106

CHAPTER ONE

AUTEURISM AND NATIONAL CINEMA: TERMS, METHODS, PROBLEMS

Introduction

In a recent exchange on the Official Peter Jackson Fanclub internet noticeboard¹, 'Furnacehead' asked Peter Jackson:

Why did you shoot *The Frighteners* in New Zealand. Hate to say it but the city looks like New Zealand not America. All the hills, the funky looking houses, even the paper towel distributor (I don't live in the states though so I am assuming but most things in here are the same). It's just something I thought about recently. It just seems to me that it would have made more sense to shoot it in the place it was supposed to take place or at least someplace that looks the same. (Furnacehead, January 22, 1998)

Peter Jackson responded:

I'm a New Zealand film maker, not an American film maker. I like to work at home. (Peter Jackson, January 26, 1998)

Despite its brevity (the norm among people handling large volumes of electronic mail) Jackson's response brings further, wider questions. While Furnacehead, a Canadian resident, sees slippage between a New Zealand-produced figuring of America on film and Canadian or American ones, Jackson's answer expands the realm of discussion to incorporate a number of other concerns. Through their quasi-private conversation between strangers via the internet's World Wide Web, the exchange articulates a condensed collection of anxieties and theoretical problems currently facing film scholarship. The brief discussion plunges to the heart of arguments about the dominant position of Hollywood and its influence in the realm of international cinema, as well as interrogating aspects of authenticity in national representation and expressing an assumption of Jackson's authorial dominance over the filmic product. The concept of articulation is used in Antonio Gramsci's (Hall 1996: 42) two senses to mean both the expression of ideas and also to indicate a connection between them (like a joint or pivot). Thus, the problem of 'a New Zealand film maker' articulates the discussion of auteurism most actively interrogated in the 1950s and 1960s with more recent concerns of national identity. The issues of national identity with regard to New Zealand are many and tangled: conceptions of a

¹ <http://www.tiac.net/users/feebles/pjforum/index.html>. The 'Question and Answer' section (Vanek: Archives) are regularly archived into a 'Frequently Asked Questions' file. All discussion from the Fanclub is used unedited. I gratefully acknowledge permission from board editor Jesse Vanek and the consent of each of the correspondents cited.

national cinema (and in particular, the position and role of a named individual within it) are more complex again.

2

This thesis interrogates in detail the territory suggested in the opening quotes, analysing the feature films of Peter Jackson and considering a number of theoretical approaches to authorship, national cinema and their relationship. In essence, this thesis seeks to understand not only what is meant by the phrase 'a New Zealand film maker' but also to demonstrate Peter Jackson's crucial role and position in that understanding. What is 'a New Zealand film maker'? And what does it mean—not only to him but to New Zealand and to the world—when Peter Jackson says he is one?

The first chapter elaborates upon the problems that arise from combining theories of auteurism—which investigated individual artistic and thematic style—with theories of national cinema. Theories of auteurism and authorship in film are historically contextualised in order to question their usefulness in present-day film research and criticism. The New Zealand film industry is considered in terms of the fluidity and multiplicity of its cultural voices and the diversity of its product to explore problems of national cinema from 'within'. The concept of 'national cinema' is then interrogated with reference to historical and contemporary examples to examine the place of New Zealand film in the international market and especially in relation to Hollywood, Australia and Britain. This chapter qualifies terms used in subsequent textual analyses to demonstrate that although terms like 'auteur' and 'national cinema', 'Hollywood' and 'New Zealand' cannot signify monolithic, discrete or ontologically fixable referents, these terms, after discussion, can be useful nonetheless if considered as conventions and convenient fictions (with limitations) rather than definitions.

Auteurism

Auteur theories of film seek to explain the nature of the director's artistic 'signature' and to find meaning in the repeated stylistic, technical and thematic characteristics of his or her films. Auteurism developed from the particular cultural and economic experiences of individual film makers and writers in post-war France, the United States and Britain, and incorporated varied perspectives about film, art, and authorship. After the post-structuralist challenges in 1968 of (among others) Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' and Michel Foucault's

discussion of the question, 'What is an Author?', auteur analysis has undergone significant theoretical transformation. 'The Death of The Author' in Barthes's sense gave rise to research into phenomenology in Germany and reader-reception theory in the United States. During the same period, particularly in Britain, theorists also considered Louis Althusser's analysis of ideology in texts and the manner by which audiences might be interpellated or constructed by the cinematic experience (Heath 1973). Feminism and psychoanalysis in film theory blossomed after Laura Mulvey's (1975) analysis of male spectatorship and subjectivity. Audience theories (that audiences construct meanings) as well as analyses of other media, in particular television and video, were developed throughout the 1970s and 1980s (see Morley 1986; Hall 1993). At the same time, auteurism had not been completely superseded: John Caughie's (1981) edition of auteurist articles connected examples of the polemical code of the *Cahiers* writers with criticism from its detractors. Although study of the *auteur* in Truffaut's sense is no longer practised academically, nevertheless contemporary film journals and academic conferences do discuss the problems of understanding the work of individual film makers so that, as Dudley Andrew (1993: 80) notes, '[a]uteurism, in short, is far from dead'.

Approaches to the film *auteur* have changed considerably since André Bazin, François Truffaut and Jacques Rivette discussed the filmic oeuvres of mainly French, Italian, and American directors with the expectation that cinema could be favourably compared to the more traditional humanist arts through the identification of an authorial position. In their history of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and its discussion of '*la politique des auteurs*', Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake (1988: 105) determine 'auteurism' to have been founded upon 'the belief that cinema was an art of personal expression, and that its great directors were as much to be esteemed as the authors of their work as any writer, composer or painter'.

This belief was first expressed by Alexandre Astruc (1968: 17) who made the comparison in 1948 between film and writing explicit with the term '*le caméra-stylo*', describing film making as 'quite simply... a means of expression, just as all the arts before it, and in particular painting and the novel'. Also considering the film maker as an equal to the author, Truffaut (1976: 225) first used the term '*auteur*' in 1954 to denote a separation of the preferred artistic film maker from the less creative *metteur-en-scène*. To Truffaut, the *metteur-en-scène* and the 'scenarist' (screenplay writer) were not artists but merely adaptative of another's art: as such, their translation of French literary texts to the cinematic medium was characterised disparagingly as a bland 'Tradition of Quality'. Truffaut (233) writes, '[w]hen [scenarists] hand in their scenario,

the film is done; the *metteur-en-scène*, in their eyes, is the gentleman who adds the pictures to it'. By contrast, an *auteur* explored and exploited the 'cinematic specificity' of film to create his or her own artistic style and vision. Later criticism by André Bazin, Jacques Rivette and Truffaut began to reposition this perceived split beyond Truffaut's divisions of filmed novels and original expression to a separation between two styles of direction and film making. *Auteur* criticism began to distinguish instead between the artistic, visionary *auteur* who, in Andrew Sarris's words, 'unifies the *what* and the *how* into a personal statement' (1968: 36), and the '*metteur-en-scène*' who is capable in cinematic craft but, nevertheless, is dogged by an 'inability to disguise that the origin of his film lies somewhere else' (Buscombe 1981: 24).

The critic's assignation of the film maker's status was often a polemical and personal decision with little discernible method or theory but with largely the same outcome: a celebration of the *auteur's* personal artistic vision. For Rivette (1985: 127), Howard Hawks '[stuck] to the same story'; for Truffaut (1985: 107), the way in which Nicholas Ray's films 'all [told] the same story' epitomised him as 'an *auteur* in our sense of the word'. Not all critics were comfortable with the assignation of value to the *auteur*: while Bazin (1985: 252) also felt that 'whatever the scenario, [the *auteur*] always tells the same story' he nevertheless challenged his critics to 'accept the permanence of talent without confusing it with some kind of artistic infallibility'. According to Peter Wollen (1969: 104), Jean Renoir remarked that 'a director spends his whole life making one film.' However, the practice—especially among the critics at *Cahiers du Cinema*—of '*la politique des auteurs*' drew criticism for its polemical preferences. Andrew Sarris attempted to resolve the *politique* by simply deleting the word from the phrase, as if prioritising the *auteur* would thus imbue it with critical credibility; nevertheless, his hierarchical Pantheon of directors (the substantial proportion of his book) was organised to suit his own tastes and purposes.²

Peter Wollen sought a theoretical perspective to justify auteurist practices; his approach remedied to some extent Bazin's (1985: 249-50) disquiet that 'as soon as you state that the filmmaker and his films are one, there can be no minor films, as the worst of them will always be in the image of their creator'. Borrowing Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's new application of Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist anthropology, Wollen hoped to develop a systematic, scientific and objective critical theory with which to discover the 'thematic patterns' of the *auteur*. According to John Caughie (1981: 127), Wollen was 'trying to exploit the objectivity of structuralism to

² Many critics consider such polemicism to be a particular weakness of early *auteur* theory. See Buscombe (1973: 26); Lapsley and Westlake (1988: 106).

destroy the romantic idealism of creativity without simply inverting it into a mechanistic determinism'. Unfortunately, a different 'mechanistic determinism' resulted because by reading the oeuvre for the unconscious myth-like structure, Wollen created a reductive auteur-structuralism which closed and finalised the texts' meanings into discoverable antithetical pairs, and that regarded each film as the offspring of something myth-like submerged in the director's psyche.

In some respects, what Wollen considered through the lens of auteur-structuralism is very similar to Michel Foucault's (1984: 110) 'author function'; but although Wollen appears, like Foucault, to separate the technician (the 'writer') from the discursive position (the 'author'), the difference lies in Foucault's critical method. For Foucault, it is the 'author function' which generates authorship; he rejects seeking the author from 'a pure and simple reconstruction made secondhand from a text given as passive material' (10). But although Foucault's idea of the author function allows critics to discern and differentiate between the living being and the associations and filiations of the body of work which carries her or his name, it must also be acknowledged that Foucault, like Roland Barthes, was considering literature rather than film or other industrial, collaborative arts.

The 'pure and simple reconstruction' of the author conceals the practical problems Wollen encountered, but it also characterises my deepest reservation toward his assumptions: Wollen's 'decipherment' or 'decryptment' (104) of a discoverable 'heterocosm' (91) or unity from the director that expresses itself through a 'master antinomy' (96) from the texts remains reductive of text, author, narrative and style. As well as a reliance on myth-like structure (which dubiously assumed that film is so like myth that it has structuralist folk-tale protonarratives and linguistic antinomies at its core), Wollen's method (94) presupposed an evolutionary progression within the director's oeuvre (beyond an expression of increased technical skill). In his example, John Ford's oeuvre reworked the problem of 'garden versus wilderness' within which further binarisms occurred and were developed differently in each film as a separate, relative context. With regard to his sense of teleology, Wollen may be compared to Bazin (1985: 254) who considered that in Orson Welles's sixth film, 'one can assume that a certain amount of progress has already been made'. Applying these attitudes to Peter Jackson's oeuvre, for example, would create numerous problems: first, there is no structuralist binary exclusively Jackson's; his use of pastiche and parody from other films means love, death, the battle of good

and evil, and so on, combine their thematic values with the aesthetic values of the genre and individual filmic source. Similarly, applying a criterion of 'progress' to Jackson's oeuvre would mean creating an aesthetic hierarchy which privileges *The Frighteners* over *Bad Taste*, a move any Jackson scholar would decry as ridiculous and entirely missing the point of Jackson's film making style and popular culture in general.

The *auteur* critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Movie* addressed critical problems of adaptation, art versus craft, polemics and personal preference, structuralism's linguistics-based binary codings and artistic progression over time. With varying amounts of success, the writers who engaged in the *auteur* debate of the 1950s and 1960s sought to account for their observations that a given director's films told the same story; at the same time, they sought to avoid creating what Bazin (1985: 257) termed an 'aesthetic personality cult'. In Foucault's (107) terms, the author is represented by a 'certain mode of discourse' which creates a 'relationship among the texts' in much the same way that Andrew Sarris (1968: 36) found the *auteur* to 'unif[y] the *what* and the *how* into a personal statement'.

The critics from *Cahiers*—Truffaut, Rivette, Bazin, Eric Rohmer and others—were conducting their discussion in the particular economic and cultural era of post-World War Two France. According to Helen Stoddart, the method of French *auteur* critics derived not only from Astruc and Truffaut's ideas about art and authorship, but also significantly from their habit of viewing several films at each sitting after the privations of war. Stoddart (1995: 39) writes,

The *politique* must... be seen as the result of a French response to a sudden influx of the backlog of Hollywood cinema which had been held up during the German Occupation in World War II. Film-goers at the Cinémathèque in Paris were able to watch several films by the same director all at once and so perhaps were better primed to spot connecting styles and themes across a director's work.

In this regard, the notion of the *auteur* can be seen to have developed in part from the cultural and historical specificity of France in the 1950s. When Bazin and Truffaut discussed whether their favourite director's body of work was art or craft, they were influenced by the material conditions of their cultural, political and economic environment.

Partly because of this, the *auteur* discussions of the 1950s and 1960s were elitist because as well as seeking to establish cinema as a high art (comparable to painting and literature), the critics and directors that participated in the viewings were almost universally white, well-educated middle-class men. In 1963 Pauline Kael (1994: 319) challenged the *auteur* enterprise

on the basis of the participants' gender, insisting that '*auteur* critics are so enthralled with their narcissistic male fantasies... that they seem unable to relinquish their schoolboy notions of human experience. (If there are any female practitioners of *auteur* criticism, I have not yet discovered them)'. A group of privileged Western men discussing films by Western men and theorising in universal terms about the meaning of cinema and the qualities of art can only be limited in its conclusions. Women *auteur* theorists and women *auteurs* are missing from the debate, and the critics that dominate the discussions offer little if any self-reflexivity in their polemical appraisals of male film makers: was Vincente Minnelli taken less seriously because he made musicals (a genre of fantasy and romance often aimed toward female audiences)? Whether the lack of female contribution to the *auteur* debate resulted from the Cinémathèque conditions in which the films were viewed or reflects instead women's lesser role in post-war intellectual society and culture is difficult to determine, but the effect upon *auteur* criticism, in Kael's view, was 'schoolboy notions of human experience'(319).

It is these political concerns that temper my discomfort with the term *auteur* in the original, French sense. However, establishing the 'creator' of a film—that is, avoiding the term *auteur* but nevertheless seeking his or her aesthetic equivalent—is no less problematical. Can there be creative artistic and stylistic consistency in an oeuvre like Jackson's packed with film pastiches and situated in popular culture? Further, who is the creative source—the director, the writer, the producer—and is their value artistic or commercial? Aside from the 'high art' versus 'craft' arguments, the complicating factors of cinema's status as an industrial art must be taken into consideration. Ann Hardy (1993: 64), discussing New Zealand film production, suggests that '[m]ost of us know that film making is almost always a collective and industrial activity, requiring the creative and technical skills of many different people, and dependent on the persuasive skills of those who approach the funding organisations'. Similarly, New Zealand writer Robyn Anderson (1997: 10) dismisses 'possessory' or 'vanity' credits which imply that authorship of a film rests with the director alone. Anderson insists that '[possessory credit is] impossible to sustain, logically, ethically and professionally' and adds, '[t]he International Affiliation Writers' Guild (IAWG) argument is not for *writers* to gain possessory credit, but to question why it is given to anyone at all'. Timothy Corrigan (1991: 102) locates the *auteur* discussion as a modernist urge among postmodern forms of popular culture, constituting an attempt by the film industry collectively 'to distinguish itself from other, less-elevated, forms of mass media (most notably, television)'. Corrigan writes;

the international imperatives of post-modern culture have made it clear that commerce is now much more than just a contending discourse: if, in conjunction with the so-called international art cinema of the sixties and seventies, the auteur has been absorbed as a phantom within a text, he or she has rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as a commercial performance of *the business of being an auteur*.

Or, as Robert Spadoni (1995) suggests, the commercial and artistic function of the auteur might be found in the film's producer rather than its director. Alternatively, producer and director might both be superseded by the name of the author from whose book the film was created ('based on the book by Stephen King'); equally, star status might decide the naming criteria ('a Sharon Stone film'). While these latter examples express publicity and promotional concerns rather than aspects of authorship, they do nevertheless illustrate that nothing may be taken for granted when discussing the 'author function' within an industrial and collaborative system.

Thus, situating the film auteur has proven problematical. Attempting to isolate auteur theories and practices sometimes increases the difficulties because auteurism represents a dynamic, complex set of relations which embraces—but cannot of itself resolve—issues of text, subjectivity and authorship within the particular technical, cultural and economic variables of the cinematic medium. The notion of the *auteur* in the original sense is also an elitist one in the twin senses that hierarchies were sought and compiled by an exclusive group of middle-class, well-educated white male writers and directors. Since the first polemical arguments of the 1950s and 1960s auteurism as a method or theory has also faced challenges to the notion of a single creator of the film within an industrial setting whose production method separates it from painting and literature. The struggle by non-directors against possessory credit highlights the contemporary difficulties with assigning categories (however heuristically useful) to a group of films on the basis of a single individual's contribution. Can we truly speak of 'a film by Peter Jackson' while still recognising the intertextual borrowings, the black comedic mood and popular culture tone in his work, and the team and industrial aspects of his film making?

Film makers in Aotearoa New Zealand (and later, perhaps, in Hollywood)

The battle for possessory credit extends beyond the naming of individuals to the naming of national cinemas. Although the political wranglings of art and individual authorship occur most visibly in relation to the production stage of film making (that is, completing the negative), the 'possession' or point of origin for the purposes of distribution and exhibition might also be contested. Film is promoted and exhibited according to a number of market forces and to

appeal to a number of audience tastes, of which the director's name and the film's genre are only two. But although New Zealand is an island nation and as such maintains a geographically distinct economic and political zone, its position within world cinema is not easily delineated. First, Aotearoa New Zealand's culture (like those of its neighbours and other post-colonial nations) is not singular, unified or fixed, but through an historical partnering contains a special relationship between Maori and pakeha.³ Second, like other national cinemas the film industry in Aotearoa New Zealand must negotiate a cultural space that distinguishes it from the film making dominance of Hollywood studio production. The relationship with Hollywood impacts upon financial, economic, political, and thematic and stylistic concerns of national cinema and it is further complicated by our other transnational relationships.

Historically, the story of cinema in Aotearoa New Zealand has not been one of equal partnership but one of pakeha dominance. Maori had little control⁴ of the production, distribution, exhibition or archiving of film for at least the first one hundred and fifty years after *Te Tiriti O Waitangi*. According to Merata Mita (Mita 1996; Parekowhai 1988) and Barry Barclay (1990), very little has changed although both Mita and Barclay work extensively to empower and facilitate Maori film making from the twin perspectives of a skills base and the creation of new filmic *taonga* (cultural treasures). Jonathan Dennis and Jan Bieringa (1996: 8) record bitterly:

There has been little for Maori people to celebrate in the Centenary [of Cinema]: of the more than 100 feature films made in New Zealand only six have been by Maori directors (two of these were documentaries). This is despite the fact that the most successful fiction feature yet produced here, *Once Were Warriors*, was a film largely under Maori control, acted, scripted and directed by Maori, yet its success has not translated into support or encouragement for projects under kaupapa Maori.

In their support for the aspirations of Maori film makers to achieve *mana motuhake* or Maori control of Maori matters, Dennis and Bieringa take film's centenary in Aotearoa New Zealand as an opportunity to critique pakeha hegemonic dominance of film making and to highlight the difficulties faced by Mita, Barclay and *Once Were Warriors* director, Lee Tamahori. Mita (1996: 47) has 'often described the New Zealand film industry as being a white, neurotic one'. Of *Patu*, her documentary about apartheid and the 1981 Springbok Rugby Tour, Mita writes,

³ In this section, I use 'Aotearoa New Zealand' to suggest that both Maori and *tauiwi* ('other peoples', including pakeha) have a place in this land; in this way, I hope to acknowledge and respect the role of *tangata whenua* in naming this land and the right to partnership guaranteed by *Te Tiriti O Waitangi*. However, in discussing Peter Jackson's films I refer to 'New Zealand' rather than 'Aotearoa' because this thesis discusses predominantly pakeha experiences, and to refer to pakeha New Zealand as 'Aotearoa' is to misappropriate the cultural and spiritual importance of the term for Maori. Thus, the term 'New Zealand' is not used to exclude Maori but to reflect pakeha culture, the cultural environment for several of Peter Jackson's films.

⁴ But this is improving; see Beattie 1996 for a bibliography of Maori film making.

I was asked repeatedly if I thought I was the right person to make the film, or why I was making it.... [S]ome of those people told me they feared that the film would not be accurate because it would have a Maori perspective! The Pakeha bias in *all* things recorded in Aotearoa was never questioned.

For Barry Barclay (1990: 71), Maori film makers have the choice to 'talk out' to other cultures or to focus upon 'talking in' and 'creating metaphors' (29) for Maori use and pleasure. With *Te Manu Aute*⁵ Barclay (7) believes that '[e]very culture has a right and a responsibility to present its own culture to its own people. That responsibility is so fundamental that it cannot be left in the hands of outsiders, nor be usurped by them'.

As I understand him, Barclay (78) sees value in different cultures sharing 'through film'. He describes the positive effects of 'cultural confidence' and 'cultural integrity'; at the same time, he voices a concern similar to that expressed by Mita (quoted above) but puts it a different way:

Perhaps... what is at the heart of many of [Maori] problems in attempting to develop communication forms within the majority culture.... [is that] [e]ven when there is the greatest of goodwill on both sides, our country's two cultures simply do not speak the same language.

For Mita, pakeha and Maori have incompatible experiences and cultural ways of dealing with those experiences because of the history (and presence) of colonialism. Mita (Parekowhai 1988: 23) criticises Costa Botes's review of her film *Mauri* on the basis that he is 'pakeha' and cannot hope to understand Maori film without being raised in that culture. This is not to say that Maori stories have not been told in sympathetic ways by non-Maori film makers or collaborative teams; Mita (1996: 40) celebrates the ethnographic films by James McDonald (from about 1907 to about 1923) which she describes as 'remarkable and rare' not only as historical artifacts but also for the 'mutual trust and deep respect' which McDonald and North Island Maori shared. For her, the fact that McDonald's films have now been returned to Maori means that they have *mana* as *taonga*. On the other hand, Botes's review (by virtue of his status as non-Maori) in her view seeks to recolonise Maori storytelling and film making. I accept Mita's assertion of *mana motuhake*, but I question Mita's negative judgment of Botes's capability as a reviewer when that judgment is based on her response to Botes's fictional film, *Stalin's Sickle*. In Botes's film the central character, a small boy, imagines his neighbour to be Joseph Stalin; however, Mita (Parekowhai 1988: 23) describes this nightmarish drama as a 'pre-adolescent white boy's fantasy' and on this basis rejects Costa Botes's position as critic of *Mauri*. I cite these examples not so much to draw conclusions from them but to demonstrate the political

⁵ *Te Manu Aute* is the 'national organisation of Maori communicators' (Barclay 1990: 7).

thorniness of the territory of cultural film making and criticism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The third Maori film maker alluded to by Jan Bieringa and Jonathan Dennis is *Once Were Warriors* director Lee Tamahori, who accumulated his cinematographic skills over many years in what Barclay termed the 'majority culture' New Zealand film making industry. Tamahori's work and role as an Aotearoa New Zealand film maker deserves further investigation because although acknowledged as a Maori director, he has also joined the ranks of expatriate film maker, directing *Mulholland Falls* and *The Edge* for Hollywood. Tamahori's experience represents the dual pressures to make films about local culture (which not only express local stories and themes but also attract NZFC funding) and the opposing temptation of greater budgets and the chance to extend one's skills and opportunities working in Hollywood.

The tension between local film making and moving overseas for increased opportunities is considerable; ironically, the shift away seems to mark the director as having 'arrived' as an Aotearoa New Zealand film maker. For example, the New Zealand Film Commission's *Annual Report* (1997a: 7) declares:

New Zealand's international reputation is now firmly linked with our film makers who have achieved world-wide reputations. Roger Donaldson, Geoff Murphy, Vincent Ward, Jane Campion, Peter Jackson, Lee Tamahori—all of these internationally-recognised film makers began their careers with the assistance of the NZFC's finance.

Of these names, only one refers to a New Zealand-based film director, Peter Jackson; ironically, the financial assistance given by the NZFC to start his career was, according to Jackson (1997: 20), given surreptitiously by 'bureaucratic pirate' NZFC executive director Jim Booth in a series of \$5000 'script development' cheques because, Booth said, 'the NZFC board... wouldn't understand' *Bad Taste*. Jackson described to Scott Murray (1994: 22) the distinction between a film maker and a 'director for hire' who is an 'employee for a studio'. Jackson said, 'I don't want to be a director as such; I want to be a filmmaker. The freedom that I have in New Zealand is worth millions of dollars to me. It is worth more than what I could earn in Hollywood' (23). Notably absent from NZFC's list are Ian Mune and Gaylene Preston, both of whom have 'international reputation[s]' and both of whom continue their careers in Aotearoa New Zealand (and with NZFC funding), contributing to the 'established base of experienced directors' Jackson feels is necessary to protect the domestic film making industry from a never-ending 'infancy' (Murray 1994: 23).⁶ Thus, there are many histories of local film makers: of the

⁶ Bill Routt (1996: 731) concludes that '[i]f Jane Campion is currently the best-known New Zealand film-maker in the world, Ian Mune is the most important historically.... [through] his tireless championing of film production in and of New Zealand... he has set himself at the heart of the contemporary industry.'

many pakeha and Maori directors to attain international acclaim, however, Peter Jackson is the most widely recognised film maker whose production base and home are in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Considerable variety exists between film makers in Aotearoa New Zealand; Merata Mita and Barry Barclay might have similar hopes to Jackson's to develop new talent and opportunities in the domestic industry but the narratives and cultural concerns expressed through their films are strongly contrasting. With this in mind, the descriptive question 'What are the characteristics of an Aotearoa New Zealand film?' can sometimes evoke a prescriptive answer, depending on the cultural politics at stake: Mita's assertion that '[pakeha would] do well to clean up their own backyards first in terms of what they present to the public as a story and particularly as a story with a statement or message in it' (Parekowhai 1988: 21) expresses a tension between her view on the potential value to Maori of film making and her view on the short drama *Stalin's Sickle* by Turkish-born New Zealand film maker Costa Botes. Like the NZFC's list which compared Jackson (who has never filmed outside Aotearoa New Zealand) to Roger Donaldson and Geoff Murphy (neither of whom has worked here for more than a decade), any list of films from Aotearoa New Zealand will reflect the hegemonic struggle by competing groups to control the terms of the debate and to select texts that reflect their (aesthetic, cultural, political) values.

One film whose status was thoroughly debated was Jane Campion's film *The Piano*. Annie Goldson (1997: 276) notes that,

Miramax, *The Piano's* distributor, had successfully packaged the film as a story about New Zealand 'history' and landscape. Campion herself was sure of its national identity, stating in an article in *NZ Film*, "It's a film made in New Zealand by New Zealanders and it's very obviously a New Zealand film".

Goldson, however, disagrees with Campion, comparing the film unfavourably to other film and television productions' use of New Zealand as a 'generic location' (277) which although generating some capital from overseas nonetheless 'smack of cultural domination and a general disregard for the local' (278). In this criticism, Goldson means 'disregard' for both local cultures (including film culture) and local landscapes which Campion 'mixes with impunity' (277); she is also expressing the 'fear' of co-production that Nicholas Reid (1986: 16) observed among film makers in the 1980s that 'New Zealand [would become] merely a "cheap backlot" [like] Spain once was to the American and European film industries'. Tino Balio (1996: 32) is less ambivalent about *The Piano's* provenance; he writes, '[a]n international co-production, Jane

Campion's *The Piano* was financed by France's Ciby 2000 and filmed in New Zealand by a native-born writer-director with a multi-national cast, that had an Australian nationality by dint of its Sydney-based producer, Jan Chapman'. Balio refers to a 'multi-national cast' while Jane Campion skirted the issue entirely in her interview response: her cast included Americans Holly Hunter and Harvey Keitel plus Anna Paquin (Canadian-born but New Zealand-based) and Sam Neill. Goldson notes that Neill, although raised in New Zealand, was born in Ireland and is, she insists, 'perceived for the most part as an "international" star'.⁷ By contrast, John Caughie and Kevin Rockett (1996: 106) do not claim Neill as Irish but do recognise Christchurch-born Len Lye in their history of British and Irish cinema. Caughie and Rockett consider the location and substance of the career—in Lye's case, his involvement with the British Documentary Movement—in determining each candidate's inclusion in their collection. (Making the issue even more confusing, Goldson (1997: 275) refers to Len Lye as a New Zealander.⁸) Part of the problem faced here is the transnational aspect of film making; a second part is the plural and fluid nature of individual identity; a third difficulty is the politics of identification and the uses to which labels and categories are put. In this example, the politics of national identity are explicitly contested within both the promotional and the academic discourses of film making.

Clearly, different groups understand national identity in different ways. Attempting to clarify the arguments by preferring certain definitions and criteria is not necessarily helpful. As Robert Young and Laura Chrisman demonstrate in their acerbic dialogue about 'national voice' and individual identity, a person's natality, nationality and ethnicity might each pertain to a different referent. Even more problematically, Young notes that the political viewpoint expressed by an individual contributes to her or his position with respect to arguments on national identity. When defending statements by her friend Benita Parry (whose writing Young had critiqued in 1996), Chrisman (1997: 44) validated her political position by self-identifying as 'the daughter of a black Marxist scholar'. In reply, Young (1997: 49) cautioned that 'a person's origins, familial or national, are not the same as the subject position that he or she adopts in academic critical discourse; nor do ethnic origins of any kind in themselves act as a guarantor against neo-colonialism'.⁹ Thus, according to Young, an individual's self-identification

⁷ Allen Meek (1997: 7) suggests that Sam Neill is an ambivalent 'expatriate' in *Cinema of Unease* and knowingly 'liminal: he oscillates between a cosmopolitan and a national identity insofar as it suits his narrative'.

⁸ Roger Horrocks (1996) cites Pacific influences in Lye's work (for example, *Tusalava*'s use of Maori, Aboriginal and Samoan art traditions) as well as his influence on experimental film making here (his works are managed from the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in New Plymouth) in describing Lye as a New Zealand film maker.

⁹ Compare Michael Meadows's (1996: 266) conclusion that 'merely being indigenous may not necessarily enable an understanding of how to represent indigeness'.

may be critiqued (within academic realms, at least) if it confuses the personal with the political. Chrisman's argument had in fact been just this, that the personal experience substantiated the political position with respect to identity theory: in her example, (only) black people can speak for black people. For Young, 'ethnic origins of any kind' cannot in themselves forestall charges of colonialist or neo-colonialist attitudes. Young's point is made heavily, and at Chrisman's expense, but is nevertheless significant to the current discussion. For him, identity in terms of authorship is fragmented: it may be multiply constructed, and it is politically inflected.¹⁰

As well as determining the national status of key personnel, a discussion on film making in Aotearoa New Zealand should also acknowledge the impact of Hollywood. New Zealand's early cinema, like Britain's (Caughie 1996: 1) and Australia's (Cook 1990: 608), was artisanal and domestically well-supported (Price 1996). However, the arrival of sound with its greater technical demands for production, distribution and exhibition meant that New Zealand film makers' output was immediately reduced. The effect of competition from Hollywood upon the indigenous film industry in New Zealand at the dawn of the sound age—late 1920s and early 1930s—was directly attributable to the technological advances of sound; before sound, much of the local demand was for local product. Rudall Hayward's silent 'community comedies'—filmed in ten days and exhibited a week later—exploited New Zealanders' desire to see themselves onscreen. Price (1996: 18) suggests that,

By cramming as many potential spectators in front of the camera as he could, Hayward ensured full attendances at the screenings, and the commercial viability of the community comedies was soon assured as audiences welcomed the unusual pleasure of seeing themselves on screen in their local environments.

The local appeal of the 'quickie' community comedy was both its financial strength and its economic failure: each town supported the film of its own community but a unified or collective development of New Zealand film and its international markets was not sustainable. The domination by American studios, however, was felt particularly strongly in Britain because 'the arrival of sound... reshaped the world market around language [and] placed Britain firmly in the same linguistic market as Hollywood' (Caughie 1996: 2), separating Britain from its European silent-era trading partners. The direct competition in a film market that had suddenly become deeply riven along linguistic lines meant that Hollywood—with its almost exclusive

¹⁰ Goldson's attitude suggests that place of residence is also important, critiquing two of her colleagues (Linda Dyson in London and Anna Neill in the United States) and Australian-based Campion for missing the nuances and resonances in *The Piano* that those living in New Zealand would read, particularly in light of the government's Fiscal Envelope policy and recent land claim settlements between Ngai Tahu or Tainui and the Crown. While not expressly accusing them of neo-colonialism, Goldson does question their right to speak about *The Piano* as a New Zealand story.

access to the expensive and cumbersome sound technology made more profitable by large studios' economies of scale—could dominate the English-speaking markets. Film makers from Britain ventured to Australia for filming locations so that during the inter-war period, 'Australia virtually ceased to have a film industry of its own but became instead a location for... British [or American] productions.... As late as 1970, Australia was known to the world mainly as the exotic site of... foreign-backed features' (Cook 1990: 608).

Albert Moran suggests that Hollywood's contemporary influence in the realms of production, distribution and exhibition¹¹ may best be described as 'global': international cinema markets are penetrated and then dominated while risk is spread through both horizontal and vertical expansion. Moran (1996: 6) finds that 'the line of demarcation between what is Hollywood and what is not has become sometimes hard to draw'.¹² But despite its presumed dominance in world cinema Hollywood does not penetrate every market in the same way; some national cinemas, particularly those of the so-called Third World¹³, are not targeted by Hollywood precisely because its market there is so small. Equally, the large population bases and locally-specific language demands of a very few Third World nations¹⁴ (particularly China and India) means that the domestic market for locally made film product supersedes the influence of Hollywood (Downing: 1987).¹⁵

In Aotearoa New Zealand, NZFC has emphasised 'telling our own stories' rather than competing with \$US50million Hollywood productions (Sorrell 1997). But the relationship between Hollywood and domestic film making is ambivalent at best: our directors make films like *Sleeping Dogs*, *Good-bye Pork Pie* or *Once Were Warriors* which function as landmarks in our developing cultural territory, and then depart to make American movies in Hollywood.

¹¹ especially since the vertical integration that was outlawed by anti-trust legislation in the 1950s has been newly re-effected by the conglomeration of mass media empires and the relaxation of antitrust rules in the Reagan years

¹² Moran (1996: 6) writes: 'With the increasing transnationalization of film production, of motion picture financing, the articulation of a long chain of distribution outlets and their domination by the majors, and the growth of independent producers who themselves frequently act as brokers between film makers and the principal distributors, the system now exists whereby national film-making is, through a series of commercial linkages, also a part of Hollywood. Recent analyses of national cinemas in nation-states as diverse as Ireland and Canada have come to the same conclusion that Hollywood is no longer out there, beyond their national borders, but is instead very much a component of their own national cinema'.

¹³ The term 'Third World' is much contested; I rely upon John H.D. Downing's definition which locates Third World cinema according to media access and control as much as the nation's economic or political status.

¹⁴ The term 'nation' is used ambivalently since, as these examples demonstrate, nations are not unified in a monolithic sense nor do they exist separately from their international context but, rather, the concept of nation functions as a convenient fiction for the purposes of expressing 'internal' and 'international' relations.

¹⁵ However, according to Mohammed Musa (1998: 4), Hollywood can still have an impact on the kinds of film made; '[i]n Asia the long established Indian movie industry has domesticated Hollywood pattern [sic] by reproducing an Indian version of Rambo'.

However, without the distribution and exhibition infrastructure that Hollywood entrepreneurs establish here and supply with American-made films, the very few films made each year by the domestic industry would have nowhere to screen and no cinema-going audience.

Peter Jackson: a New Zealand film auteur?

Undertaking a 1950s or 1960s *auteur* study by combining polemics with cinémathèque-style film viewing, or using a 1970s auteur-structuralist approach which discovers a fundamental mythic binarism that develops throughout the director's evolving oeuvre, would provide inappropriate methodologies for examining Peter Jackson's filmic oeuvre not only because his films embrace popular culture through their pastiches and parodies of cult, pulp and genre movies but also because Jackson's oeuvre explores concepts of pakeha identity in New Zealand. Nevertheless, we may reconfigure auteurist principles to examine the material relations between art and industry to locate the authorial voice of Jackson's personal mannerisms, style and tone, and to explore the complex interrelations between the auteur and national cinema.

The remaining chapters each consider a feature film directed by Peter Jackson (presented chronologically according to the film's New Zealand release date) with the dual contexts of auteur criticism and national identity in mind. Chapter Two considers commentary from Lawrence McDonald's 1993 analysis of Jackson's 'oeuvre' and undertakes a detailed reading of *Bad Taste*, considering the settings, dialogue and characterisations to draw conclusions about the film's representations of pakeha masculinity. With the cinematic release of *Meet The Feebles* Peter Jackson began to be discussed and to discuss himself as having a recognisable cinematic style; Chapter Three examines the film's articulation of parodic national stereotypes and low or grotesque bodies, and closes with a consideration of the sense of authorship promulgated by Jackson and his critics. Chapter Four develops Lawrence McDonald's auteur-like findings in detail to explore the emerging portrait of Jackson's distinctive cinematic style and thematic concerns, and analyses the ideological messages within the nostalgic 'Kiwiana' style in *Braindead*. Many New Zealand critics of *Heavenly Creatures* applauded its seeming difference from Jackson's previous work but few investigated this assumption beyond their own taste preferences or examined in detail the film's relation to his oeuvre; Chapter Five illustrates how the visual style and tone link Jackson's fourth film to his oeuvre of New Zealand-based black comedies. Chapter Six discusses *Forgotten Silver*'s use of pastiche to both construct and to

parody and satirise nostalgia toward cinema's centenary and the cultural hero-worship of pakeha blokes with Kiwi ingenuity. *The Frighteners* marks a shift to non-New Zealand film making for Jackson; Chapter Seven probes the economic, industrial, cultural and 'national' aspects of the auteur to suggest that Jackson's first Hollywood film retains (but reconfigures) his oeuvre's characteristics including its New Zealandness (which serves to mock the film's Americanness). Peter Jackson's films encompass diverse genre and narrative classifications but the oeuvre's seeming divergence is subordinate to its consistencies, found in Jackson's individual transformation of American genre film moments, British 'Monty Python'-style carnivalesque humour and New Zealand settings, characters and myths. Above all, Jackson's films express through parody and satire an ambivalent affection and mockery toward New Zealand identity and culture.

CHAPTER TWO

'THIS IS A JOB FOR REAL MEN' (IS) PAKEHA MASCULINITY IN *BAD TASTE* (?)

Foretaste

Prior to *Bad Taste*, his first feature-length film prepared for release, Peter Jackson had completed fifteen short films using 8mm stock.¹ Lawrence McDonald (1993: 11), in assessing Peter Jackson's early oeuvre (summarised in Tony Hiles's 1988 documentary, *Good Taste Made Bad Taste*), describes Jackson's childhood experiments thus:

An excerpt from *The Dwarf Patrol* (1971) looks like nothing so much as a child's version of *Revolt of the Zombies* (1936, U.S.A., Dir: Victor Halperin); *The Valley* (1976), a tribute to special effects master Ray Harryhausen who effectively authored the Sinbad/Jason and the Argonauts films; *James Bond* (1977), with Jackson himself as 007, displaying some swish flick knife technique on the Kapiti Coast, and finally, *The Curse of the Grave Walker* (1981), a fully-fledged homage to Roger Corman's brand of horror film making, shot in a primitive letter-box form of cinemascope!

McDonald sees a clear link between Jackson's childhood 'home apprenticeship in genre film making' and his first three feature releases.² While not using the term 'auteur', McDonald nevertheless finds 'a remarkably coherent body of work' (10) or 'oeuvre' (11) and concludes that Jackson's 'first three features add up to a gore-nucopia of comedy-horror' (15).

McDonald's brief summary foreshadows several aspects that I recognise as typifying Jackson's film making. For example, reworking themes from identifiable American genre films (particularly zombie/horror films), the use of hand-worked special effects (like models, or in *Braindead*, the stop-motion animation technique which characterised Harryhausen's filmic contributions), the resourceful action hero (played by Jackson) and a greater-Wellington area setting are all to be found in *Bad Taste*. Thus, while I have only the resources to focus upon feature films in this thesis, I am indebted to (and not surprised by) the results of McDonald's analysis.

Although some aspects are comparable—a New Zealand setting, Jackson as an actor,

¹ WingNut Films's press kit for *Bad Taste* states there were fifteen; McDonald's article acknowledges eleven.

² My thesis examines Jackson's feature films as encompassing commercial and economic influence as well as artistic, thematic and 'national' tendencies—aspects of his authorship to which his childhood film making cannot contribute.

reworked films and genres, model making, trick photography and so forth—*Bad Taste*, not surprisingly, considers more mature themes and concepts than his childhood oeuvre did. Adult preoccupations—from romance and sexuality, tragedy, violence and death, to the quotidian mundane details of employment and household responsibilities—guide his plots and themes, although he does not necessarily treat these concerns seriously. If there is one overarching meta-feature of Jackson's films, it is his transgressive sense of black comedy with which he constructs his fantastic worlds. Further, the representations of New Zealand and 'New Zealandnesses' can also be read transtextually across Jackson's oeuvre as conveying a dark sense of fantasy.

Bad Taste's impossible world pits four isolated pakeha workmates against a 'full-scale invasion of Earth'. The comic value derives from the men's success despite their obvious inadequacies (for example, the hero's brain must be strapped into his head with a belt). While considering from time to time the references to other films that Jackson includes (especially *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *ET*, and *Evil Dead* and the television shows *Dr Who* and *Star Trek*) as well as grotesque bodies, rude gestures, and blood'n'guts splatter imbued with slapstick humour ('splatstick'), the key concern of this analysis of *Bad Taste* is Jackson's ambivalent construction of pakeha masculinity.

Bad Taste: Pakeha-nesses, masculinities

Lawrence McDonald (1993: 13) writes of Jackson's first two features, '*Bad Taste* has an all male cast, *Meet The Feebles* an all puppet one.' Although I agree with the second statement, two of *Bad Taste's* Third Class Aliens are played by women (Margaret Byford and Janine Riely) and the opening scenes include a female voice responding to the emergency call which brings 'The Boys' to Kaihoro. Therefore, some of the cast are female although the roles (barring the disembodied voice) are all male. As well as an all-male cast, *Bad Taste* has an all-pakeha cast: any discrepancy in the groups of actors is subordinated and minimalised by the film's prominent display³ of pakeha maleness. The aliens, their dinner (Giles), and the heroes of the Astro-Investigation and Defence Service team—Derek, Ozzy, Frank and Barry—are all male pakeha blokes but each main character has a distinctive personality. By discussing the

³ This homogeneity is achieved by dressing the Third Class Aliens alike and avoiding identifying close-ups; this approach was necessary partly because Jackson shot the film on weekends and any given group of five aliens had to look like any other group of five aliens the following week, and partly because some actors 'died' several times each. Barbara Cairns and Helen Martin (1994: 75) note that 'Ken Hammon... dies twenty-three deaths on screen; in many scenes actors play both the aliens and their assassins'.

intricacies of the AIDS team individually and in contrast to Giles, Lord Crumb and Robert, the meaning of Jackson's representations of pakeha (and alien) masculinities may be explicated and evaluated.

Bad Taste is set in the small coastal hamlet of Kaihoru on Saturday October 31st and Sunday November 1st. The action was filmed, according to Jackson (Vanek: archives), at 'a combination of Makara and Pukerua Bay' over nearly four years of weekends (although Jackson worked full-time to complete the film once NZFC funding became available). Jackson, born on Halloween (October 31st) in 1961, grew up in Pukerua Bay's small community of baches and holiday homes on the Kapiti Coast north of Wellington. Although Halloween is not widely celebrated here, American horror films have made New Zealanders aware of the carnival significance for American audiences as well as providing Jackson with a recognisable generic model for (spoof) horror film making. But while the film reflects something personal of Jackson's life, it is not autobiographical; similarly, Kaihoru as a setting is not the same as the place of filming. Kaihoru is a fictional town both ontologically—there is no place called Kaihoru—and visually—it is an amalgam of Makara and Pukerua Bay (plus also the Gear Homestead at Porirua). Just as the year is not specified (and thus, represents the eternal present of 'any year'), the setting comes to represent any small town by the sea.

Why 'Kaihoru'?⁴ H.W. Williams (1992: 87) provides the following explanations for the Maori word *kaihoru*: the transitive verb *kaihoru* means '[e]at greedily'; it also means, '[d]o hurriedly or vigorously'. In his grammar section Williams (xxxiv) notes that '[k]ai prefixed to a transitive verb forms a noun connoting the agent; thus, hanga, make; kaihanga, maker'. Thus, *kaihoru* is also a noun: *horu*, swallow; *kaihoru*, glutton.⁵ For English-speakers who know only a little *te reo Māori*, *kaihoru* might also convey a sense of 'horror' with the idea of 'food' or *kai*. Certainly, the film does not dispute this meaning of the word either: the food in *Bad Taste* is utterly horrific. By using the word *kaihoru* for the film's fictional town, Jackson has not only removed any associations of existing places (or transplanted new ones onto a named town) but he has also attached a deep significance to the location of the action. Whether the sheep in the adjoining pasturelands signify New Zealand's historical reliance on meat export to Britain and thus Lord Crumb's menu of 'juicy raw rump' and 'spinal fluids forcemeat' refers to a new export trade of equally tasty (or disgusting) prime cuts of human flesh is of less interest, at this

⁴ My thanks to Michael Cusdin for encouraging this line of questioning.

⁵ Thus *kai*, most often understood by non-speakers of *te reo Māori* as merely 'food', adds more to the noun *kaihoru* with this sense of agency. Although other dictionaries (see Ryan, 1983) list *kaihoru* separately as a noun, Williams (whose work extends to earliest contact records) lists only the verb.

point, than the fact that Jackson has used a Maori word as a place name in an otherwise pakeha-set film.

The combination of eating greedily and working quickly or hurriedly makes *kaihoru* a powerful metaphor within *Bad Taste*. The plot follows the AIDS team members' attempts to rescue Giles, the main course for alien invaders before they leave for Nailic Nod with Kaihoru's population already processed for consumption and packaged into soggy, bloody cardboard boxes. The interpolation of the Maori word, *kaihoru*, into a human-flesh-eating context also raises the spectre of cannibalism, a trope which dominated colonial contact by Europeans with 'Other' indigenous peoples including English contact with Maori since James Cook's arrival. According to Michael Cusdin (1998), colonial historians often took for granted that Maori consumption of human flesh occurred (Eldson Best exemplified this attitude); however, William Arens disputes that any *evidence* of cannibalism exists other than myth, boasting and an anthropological record distorted by nineteenth century self-perpetuating colonialist tropes of race and otherness.⁶ Hence, the 'horror' of the *kai* is more politically charged because it suggests Maori cannibalism with the residents of Kaihoru as the victims.

Is 'Kaihoru' an innocently coded verbal pun, or does it represent the (mis)appropriation of *te reo Māori*? Is it perhaps the expression of a self-aware pakeha identity which realises the complex and distinctive cultural impact of *māoritanga* on the no-longer-European white colonial population? Discussing pakeha culture Michael King (1991: 19) writes that,

[w]hile Maori are Maori and Pakeha are Pakeha, each has been influenced by the other and had his or her culture shaped decisively by the other. One essential ingredient of Pakeha-ness... is contact with and being affected by things Maori.... My brush with [Maori values] doesn't make me Maori. But they are an essential part of the experience that makes me Pakeha—experiences I could not have had access to in any other part of the world.... For a growing number of people, even those who react negatively to the encounter, Pakeha-ness embraces some experience of Maori history, habits, values and expectations'.

But King does not establish the importance of *self-conscious* exploration of bicultural relationships between Maori and pakeha cultures; is a New Zealand film that excludes 'things Maori' and prefers European-descended representations a pakeha film, a racist film? What 'things Maori' are included in *Bad Taste* apart from the fictional placename Kaihoru? The landfall and indigenous plants identify the setting as Aotearoa New Zealand; nevertheless, the

⁶ Cusdin cites: Eldson Best (1976-82) *Maori religion and Mythology: being an account of the cosmogony, anthropogeny, religious beliefs and rites, magic and folklore of the Maori folk of New Zealand*. Wellington: Dominion Museum. William Arens (1979) *The man-eating myth: anthropology and anthropophagy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

landscape represented is not purely native forest and bush untouched by Maori, European or pakeha influences. There is a sense to the landscape of both pre- and post-colonial contact, of natural and cultural, in the volcanic shorelines, toitoi and matagouri plants juxtaposed with coastal baches, a red telephone box and a Morris Minor driven on the left-hand side of the road. The vestiges of the Empire's historical colonising influence—suggested by the opening shot of the Queen, and the wristwatch one of the AIDS team wears commemorating the 1981 wedding of Prince Charles and Diana Spencer—are refigured in *Bad Taste's* narrative as contemporary symbols of postcolonial New Zealandness.

To answer the questions left unresolved on previous pages—Is 'Kaihoru' merely a code, the (mis)appropriation of *te reo Māori*, or the self-conscious expression of a pakeha identity?—I need to consider in more depth the way *Bad Taste's* representations, parodies and satires of masculinity and pakeha-ness express a range of cultural and social experiences.

'The Boys': Derek, Barry, Frank and Ozzy

Each of 'The Boys' contributes to the group's solidarity; at the same time, the representations of pakeha masculinities are not homogeneous. Derek is sadistic towards Robert the alien (both played by Jackson), and sets about torturing him with a mallet and a sword (which Robert later adopts for his own use).⁷ As the alien howls, Derek mockingly howls with him—a parody of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* dinner sequence where Sally, tied to a chair, shrieks in fear and her captors (including a feminised Leatherface) shriek back, frightening her further. Nevertheless, Derek is not a coward; when other aliens amass to rescue Robert, Derek refuses to hide saying 'I'm a Derek and Dereks don't run'. A tussle develops and Derek falls to his 'death' on the rocks; later he recovers, holds his burst head together with a belt, collects a chainsaw from his customised Beatlemobile (a blue 1970s Anglia with an upper deck and life-size cut-outs of the Fab Four in Sgt. *Pepper* dress) and chainsaws a cartoonish Derek-shaped hole in the aliens' home. After chainsawing through Lord Crumb Derek emerges saying 'I'm born again'; wearing Lord Crumb's face like a Leatherface mask, he prepares to meet the 'bastards' on Nailic Nod.

⁷ Because Derek and Robert are both played by Jackson, the 'torture' sequence also appears sadomasochistic. However, the sense of psychological terror this scene creates is humorously undermined by Derek's cry for 'Mummy' as he falls.

Dribbling and spattered with blood and guano Derek is an unlikely hero, slipping on cowpats and making 'rat-tat-tat' noises even though his machine gun drowns them out. His language is classic blokespeak: the aliens are 'intergalactic wankers' and 'dirty hooers' and Derek notes there are 'no glowing fingers on these bastards' (unlike Steven Spielberg's friendly extraterrestrial, *ET*). The belt holding his head together gives him a distinctly *Rambo*-esque look (despite his physical pratfalls). But whereas John Rambo was often uncommunicative, Derek enjoys making verbal taunts: before chainsawing Lord Crumb he declares, 'Suck my spinning steel, shithead'.

By contrast, his teammate Barry is more sensitive and reserved; he is cautious with weapons, encouraging Derek to climb a tree rather than to attack the alien horde. Like Derek, Barry's attempts at machismo and toughness are visually comic: while Derek trips jumping the fence, Barry snags his parka hood on a spike. When Derek asks him for a tissue sample from the alien, Barry looks at his blood-soaked trousers and responds, 'No need, I'll just wring out my strides'. He considers Ozzy's fetish for large guns to be a 'personality disorder' and is happy to abandon the fight once Giles has been rescued. Barry would rather avoid violence, at one point asking Derek 'why can't aliens be friendly?' His language is less macho and he is sensitive of his mates' feelings; he describes Derek's fall as 'turn[ing] up his toes' and 'pop[ping] his rivets'.

Frank (the team leader) focusses on the bureaucratic aspects of their work, worrying about contacting 'head office', the 'bloody paperwork' involved, and filling in his overtime sheets. In this regard he typifies the satirical characters of Roger Hall's play *Glide Time* (or the television series, *Gliding On*) who work in 'Stores' for a government department and never seem to achieve anything except doing their utmost to look busy. He is dominated by rules and reminds Ozzy that the team is 'a government department, not a paramilitary unit'. His language is bloke-ish and irreverent: 'Christ', he says of Derek, 'what a dork. How the hell'd he get in this team?' In other details, however, Frank leads the others and has a particularly strong relationship with Ozzy, if only to keep him in line. 'Remember Ozzy', Frank chides, 'in quietly, out quietly'. 'Well', responds Ozzy, somewhat hurt, 'I certainly hope that *is* the case'. Unlike Derek's bizarre customised Anglia Beatlemobile and Giles's elderly and feminine Morris Minor, Frank's car is stereotypically masculine—a recent model Ford Cortina with a powerful stereo, sheepskin carseat covers and rear-window louvres.

Frank's work partner Ozzy is enthusiastic about the paramilitary opportunities the work provides. If Frank is bureaucratic, Ozzy is openly untamed; however, he is not bloodthirsty for the sake of killing but looks forward to his 'turn with the magnum' or using a rocket launcher. Ozzy believes aliens 'don't need a base [because] they could just beam themselves down from their spaceship' (Frank retorts: 'Well maybe they haven't seen *Star Trek*, Ozzy'), or that they could travel 'in a telephone box' (like *Dr Who*). Ozzy also believes that 'Springbok warships' are nuclear-capable and looks forward to 'open season on ETs'. When he pulls an alien's head from its shoulders and dropkicks it through a window, he smiles at his rugby prowess and quietly notes 'the old magic's still there'. Although he reads *Soldier of Fortune* and snub-noses his bullets with a rasp, Ozzy has never been in a gun battle before but declares to Giles that 'this one's gonna be beaut, eh?' He believes that Frank 'should've bought a Holden'—the quintessentially tough man's car—and strips down to his singlet in order to finish off the remaining aliens. He represents the stereotyped ignorance of the rugby-playing bloke who has no concept of the political controversy surrounding the 1981 Springbok rugby tour nor any understanding of the ANZUS agreement put to the test by New Zealand's exclusion of United States's nuclear-capable warships.

The Boys thus represent diversity yet also comprise a strong group. What they have in common is not just their status as co-workers but also their bond of 'mateship'. Coupled with their position as the protectors of planet Earth ('and the Moon') is their collective status as pakeha men. By contrast, the aliens' difference is represented through aspects of sexuality and also in terms of a cultural 'other' that seeks to colon-ize (literally, to eat and process through their digestive systems) the people of Kaihoro and, by extrapolation, the population of the whole planet. *Bad Taste*'s aliens thus articulate homoeroticism with (the fallacy of Maori) cannibalism through the activities at Kaihoro and on their spaceship.

'The Others': Giles, Robert and Lord Crumb

Of the representations of gender in the film, its composer Michelle Scullion told Barbara Cairns and Helen Martin (1994: 81),

A few of my female friends have said that they never want to see *Bad Taste* because it's a Boy's Own film. But I think Peter's done it really well. It doesn't offend me that there's not one female image in the whole film; that's not what it's about. There's a piece of life in New Zealand that is boys out playing in the weekend. It's pre-sexual, little boys stuff.

While the lone female character speaks only a minor role, Giles the charity collector appears satirically feminised (in contrast with the overtly macho Boys): he is non-assertive, reactive, easily frightened, a poor driver and in constant need of rescuing. His pratfalls recall Derek's lack of physical coordination: when he asserts himself by giving Robert 'the finger', he immediately slips and falls on his face; when he reaches his car and finally starts it he tells Robert 'Bye bye' but inadvertently leaves the handbrake on, making for a comically slow escape. At the nearest house, Giles rushes to the door for help only to be met by Reg the Cook—the house is the alien ship—and like Sally in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, Giles has run straight toward the epicentre of depravity and danger. Reg (wearing a 'Sunlight Soap' apron in a Kiwiana parody of the butcher's apron Leatherface wore) knocks Giles out and marinades him for the aliens' farewell feast. Unlike Sally, however, Giles is not alone but will eventually be rescued by The Boys (by contrast, she rescued herself). In this respect, Giles is more feminised than Sally even though his actions often mirror hers. Nevertheless, Giles is saved the misogynistic torture to which Sally was subjected by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's* Leatherface.

Like *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Bad Taste* compares the eating of animals with the eating of human flesh. In *Chainsaw Massacre*, the stench of the old slaughterhouse generated a discussion on animal culling techniques (particularly the merits of mallets—a preferred weapon for the aliens in *Bad Taste*), and human flesh is accidentally eaten by the future victims. *Bad Taste* also considers the possibilities of humans as 'livestock' and 'an exotic taste sensation': according to Lord Crumb 'you can get a whole town into a few cardboard boxes if you slice off the fat'. Part of the manner by which Giles is exoticized is the aliens' interest in his flesh; Giles is explicitly compared to an animal (indicated by the apple stuffed suckling-pig like into his mouth, through which he can barely grunt) in a manner that Sally, in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, was not. But *Bad Taste* clearly recontextualizes the metaphor in a New Zealand sense rather than retaining the Texan setting, the onscreen slaughter of the protagonists, and the psychologically disturbing woman-torturing of *Chainsaw Massacre*.

Ozzy's joke that Derek's alien captive is a farmer (wearing jeans and a blue shirt and having a 'screw loose') coupled with the suggestion that Kaihoru looks like an 'abattoir' makes explicit the similarities between eating the sheep which dot the pastureland around Kaihoru, and eating human flesh. New Zealand's farming traditions are parodied through the grotesque aliens' frenzy and further lampooned by Ozzy's careless explosion of a grazing sheep (and with it, one institutionalized myth of national identity) when he was aiming for the 'historic homestead'

(another mythic institution, intimately tied to New Zealand's selectively-maintained history of colonialism). But ultimately, the heroic AIDS team saves New Zealand (and the world) from the unnatural colonisation of the aliens which recuperates the pastoral farmers' dominant and elevated position in the social order, predicated since the 1880s on refrigerated sheep-meat exports to Britain.

The AIDS team destroy Lord Crumb, Robert and his aliens, but the pun on 'AIDS' does not only refer to the traumatic blood-thirsty practices which The Boys seek to end but also connotes a 1980s perspective of (the alien's style of) male-male intimacy. When Lord Crumb admires and kisses Robert's 'lovely little botty' at night the two main alien characters share a homosexual and physical connection that represents a sense of 'other'-ness and serves to distinguish the aliens from The Boys—the bastions of normal, healthy, violent pakeha manhood. The aliens are further differentiated by their transformed shapes, with rounded and distended heads, bellies, buttocks, knees and shoulders. According to Desmond Morris (1969: 75), roundedness of bodies in female primates (including humans) functions as 'sexual self-mimicry' of the buttocks, so that breasts and rounded shoulders draw attention to the reproductive parts of the female body and increase the visual prompts that encourage the male to approach the female sexually. In *Bad Taste*, the excessive buttock display is not matched with breasts; the aliens are not feminised but fetishized into exaggerated homoeroticized male grotesques. Similarly, the manner by which Reg's phallic knifeblade caresses Giles's face in a homoerotic and sexually sadistic gesture means that rather than being feminised through his entrapment, Giles has become the object of unnatural alien (read: homosexual) desire. By rescuing Giles, The Boys save him from the twin fates of homosexual contact and cannibalism. As such, they recuperate him as a pakeha male; by the same token, Derek's victory over Lord Crumb vanquishes the alien threat and leaves the rest of the Earth safely straight and uneaten.

The Boys together represent a variety of personalities and styles contained within the aegis of 'pakeha masculinity'. Barry's tramping parka balances Ozzy's 'tough' leather jacket and Frank's unlit cigar butts contrast the youthfulness of Derek's school scarf and Newmans Coachlines bag. A liberal sprinkling of phrases like 'alien jokers', 'Jesus, he's gone apeshit', 'did you have to drink some chuck?', and so on marks the AIDS team's language as characteristically bloke-ish in a manner usually associated with working-class New Zealand men. Their conversations do not explore relationships or feelings; beer and rugby exist for them but not women, families or aspirations. Much of the characteristic sense of New Zealandness

has little direct reference to the pakeha-ness that Michael King explores because apart from 'Kaihoru', nothing in *Bad Taste* recognises or expresses the unique interrelationship between Maori and pakeha in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In this respect, then, 'Kaihoru' can be understood as shorthand, an encoded and highly symbolic sign of both Maori presence and Maori absence. As such, Kaihoru appropriates *māoritanga* in a manner critiqued by film maker Merata Mita (Parekowhai 1988: 21) who said,

Somehow pakehas feel free to take Maori characters, take Maori stories, and actually because they're pakeha they're taking them out of context and presenting an interpretive or derivative view of Maori people rather than an authentic one.

Although Angus Calder (1996: 3) has warned of the difficulty of asserting "'authenticity" unless [we] were talking about the genuineness of, say, a rare stamp or a manuscript', Mita's point is still relevant in contemporary understandings of pakeha-ness and Maori-ness in terms of cultural products. Mita's feelings that pakeha incorporation of Maori elements (even to examine or critique pakeha-ness) is unacceptable leaves very little cultural or political space for serious exploration by pakeha of what King (20) called the 'symbiotic' relationship between *māoritanga* and 'a second indigenous New Zealand culture' (King's italics, 19). Clearly, King (a pakeha man) and Mita (a Maori woman) have opposite views on the cultural processes which constitute pakeha identity: Mita prefers to separate the two cultures whereas King encourages those who would dismiss the term 'pakeha' and identify as 'European New Zealanders' to reconsider how their cultural frames of reference are derived from the Aotearoa New Zealand experience and context.

But *Bad Taste* eschews cultural politics and social realism; rather than undertake a self-conscious examination of gender roles and biculturalism its characterisations parody and satirise archetypal examples of pakeha masculinities, creating an ambivalent mockery of the myths of Kiwi joker identity. The dominant values and concerns of straight pakeha males are established in *Bad Taste* only to be lampooned by the AIDS team's ineffectiveness. Peter Jackson told Cairns and Martin (81), 'It's actually about a bunch of blokes trying to be macho but failing. I think women do find that amusing'. That Jackson describes the four men as 'failing' requires elaboration because alone, *Rambo*-esque in his dress, and using a masculine land-taming tool, (the chainsaw), Derek vanquishes the alien leader in classic macho style. Despite their pratfalls, then, the 'blokes' who 'fail' at being 'macho' are reinscribed as heroic through Derek's victory: Giles is rescued, after all. But the victory is hollow: the townspeople of Kaihoru were

not saved, merely avenged through the retributive slaughter of Lord Crumb's aliens. The Boys have achieved redemption through vengeance and violence on behalf of Kaihoro's townspeople. Yet the humour throughout *Bad Taste* yields ambivalent messages: are The Boys heroes or failures? Is Derek mad, or a champion? How is the 'AIDS' team's defeat of the (privately) homosexual carnivorous aliens meaningful when considered through the lens of a 1980s understanding of HIV and AIDS as transmitted through blood exchange during traumatic gay sex? Read in this manner, the destruction caused by the AIDS team represents a Pyrrhic homophobic triumph over the alien 'other'.

The parody through which the meanings are doubled and contradictory not only derives from the characters' gendered representations and their explicit pakeha-ness, but also offers space for a critique of macho blokedom to be read. In this sense, the title conveys with the *Bad Taste* of human flesh fast-food and the splatter genre and its concomitant blood, offal and vomit, a subtextual self-critique of pakeha male values and practices.

Aftertaste

My discussion of *Bad Taste* has focussed upon the representation of pakeha masculinity because it dominates the filmtext and because this thesis seeks to understand the articulation of national identity and auteurism. Peter Jackson's varied pakeha characterisation in *Bad Taste* seems to ignore the cultural influences of the *tangata whenua* (in Michael King's sense of pakeha-ness) except to use one word of *te reo Māori* (as a richly encoded metaphor). Nevertheless, Jackson's framing and construction of pakeha identity can be described in popular terms as credible and compelling not despite these factors but because of them. His representation of pakeha New Zealand in *Bad Taste* is valid—and not racist or exclusive—because his film satirises and transgresses New Zealand pakeha expectations and values, which allows pakeha to explore and challenge those values for themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

'WE COULD HAVE CALLED IT "A PASSAGE TO INDIA"' GROTESQUE MULTICULTURALISM IN *MEET THE FEEBLES*

The emerging auteur

With the cinema release of *Meet The Feebles* in 1989 Peter Jackson began to be discussed, and to discuss himself, in terms of a director with a discernible style and oeuvre. Ian Pryor (1990: 9) described Jackson as the 'newly-crowned kiwi bad taste king'; Leigh Paatsch (1989) found *Meet The Feebles* consistent with Jackson's 'reputation as the Scorsese of scum' and aligned *Bad Taste* with *Feebles*, writing that '[a]gain, the director calls upon a shoot-em-up ending to conclude proceedings'. Jackson expressed bemusement to Chris Bourke (1989: 69) at the 'aura' attributed to the director because '[t]here are people here who [work] far harder than me... and who are equally skilled in their fields as I am' involved in the creation of *Meet The Feebles*. Robin Hill (1989) concluded that 'Jackson isn't worried that his first two feature films have typecast him as a film-maker of the bizarre. [Jackson says,] "In the New Zealand film industry, typecasting doesn't really apply because so few films are made."' Jackson's comment is refreshingly naive (although, as I shall explain later, perhaps a little disingenuous): it is precisely because so few New Zealand films are made each year that the work of an individual is quickly 'typecast' or classified. In order for New Zealand film makers to make an impact in the ever-expanding and competitive international marketplace, name-recognition and stylistic individuality have become increasingly important. In the same article, however, Jackson insisted that the 'one unifying thing' in all his films was 'black comedy'. Thus, several aspects of auteurism have already been enumerated: Pryor finds Jackson's 'bad taste' style differentiates him among New Zealand film makers whereas Paatsch presumes the auteur status of Martin Scorsese and compares Jackson's style to it, also noting the structure of the climax in Jackson's two films as a narrative consistency. Hill suggests Jackson would be 'typecast' which Jackson perceives negatively, preferring instead to accent positively his sense of 'black comedy' as the 'one unifying thing'. Although the terms are not academically phrased—'unifying *thing*' not 'theme' or 'cinematic style' or 'genre'—these brief examples demonstrate that some aspects of auteur theory shape not only the critics' responses but also the film maker's perspective and attitude.

Timothy Corrigan described the Hollywood studio system's promotion of directors as appending an economic function to the auteur, producing a marketable package that emphasised the director's name rather than appraising his or her stylistic, thematic or narrative individuality. According to Corrigan (1991: 102), the function and form of the *auteur* has 'rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as a commercial performance of *the business of being an auteur*' (Corrigan's italics). Jackson's comments indicate that he already understood in 1989 the necessity of distinctiveness and the promotional role of the director's name. One reason a 'personal vision' or style already seemed to cohere was that in his interviews of 1989 and 1990, Jackson worked consistently to align *Meet The Feebles* with both *Bad Taste* and his next project, *Braindead*.¹

Braindead had been postponed in 1988, Jackson told Chris Bourke (1989: 68), because '[Finance Minister] Roger Douglas's resignation threw one investor off, and other factors caused people to be wary of taking risks'. Thus Jackson emphasised the success of *Bad Taste*—which had recouped its budget 'and sold to ten countries in six days' at Cannes in 1988 (Cairns and Martin, 1994: 69)—in order to promote *Feebles* and thereby potentially confirm the \$3million funding needed for creating *Braindead*. His comments also indicate an awareness that the economic climate in which the New Zealand film industry operated meant that more than one source of funding was needed to complete films. Jackson told Thomas Taylor (1989) that *Meet The Feebles* was supported by a 'very brave' NZFC to the value of \$450,000 (although the Film Commission declined to be named in the film's credits²) and a pre-sale advance of \$US150,000 from a Japanese distributor which was not only 'the highest New Zealand pre-sale to the Japanese' (Bourke, 1989: 68) but also determined that *Feebles* would be a feature-length film rather than a half-hour episode—as originally intended—for the television series *Uncle Herman's Bedtime Whoppers* (Pryor, 1990).

From the quotations above it can be determined that Jackson was conscious of the opportunity and necessity to connect his first two (or sometimes, three) features and thus to construct and promote a degree of 'brand-name recognition'. As a result, Jackson speaks through the popular press to international markets and audiences similar to those that made *Bad Taste* a commercial and popular success; at the same time, Jackson's alignment of *Meet The Feebles* with *Bad Taste* and *Braindead* speaks to potential sources of funding to suggest that his

¹ See Bourke, 1989; Danielsen, 1989; Hill, 1989; Hegan, 1990. Le Petit, 1989, mentions 'a zombie horror movie' but also writes, 'don't be surprised if you see him turn up in Hollywood with an epic fantasy film called *Blubberhead* that he's been working on for some time'.

² Bourke also notes (68) that *Meet The Feebles* was twice declined money from the NZFC's Short Film Fund.

films exploit a commercially successful formula, so that he courts possible investors through his 'brand-naming'.

The interviewers also conflate the films, seeing similarities or progression within the slim 'oeuvre'. Paul Le Petit (1989) writes, '[f]rom the director of the shoestring budget cult hit *Bad Taste* comes *Meet The Feebles*: a sort of *Bad Taste* Two. Or Even Worse Taste'; Shane Danielsen (1989) sees that Jackson 'has moved on from his shoddy but hilarious debut'. However, the rubric of authorship expressed in these brief examples is not derived from the *auteur* debates of critics in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in the 1950s and 1960s; nor is it the fundamentally commercial persona of the 1980s and 1990s that Timothy Corrigan theorized. Rather, Jackson's role as film maker is expressed in several different ways; none of the persons cited (including Peter Jackson) explicitly referred to *auteur* theories or terms, yet each touched upon a portion of the overall argument. Each writer clearly held one or more assumptions about the role of the director in the creation of film that led them to expect that *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles* would have features in common that might be traced back to Jackson—Jackson the director who fashions a distinctive (or changing) style, Jackson the real historical person, Jackson the brand-name. *Auteurism* as a discourse has entered the public arena but its fragmented parts are reconfigured in popular film journalism so that each article offers a different perspective on Jackson and his films.

As well as circumventing the thorny academic problems that continue to plague *auteur* theories, the writers discussing Peter Jackson's first two films did not self-consciously question their assumptions that just two films could comprise a cohesive and meaningful oeuvre. One of the few points of agreement among *auteur* theorists was that a significant body of work must be established before discussing the merits of its authorship; however, the relative scarcity and paucity of funding options in New Zealand meant that Jackson's decision—to construct a marketable oeuvre from his two completed films and thus also to promote the concept of *auteurism* to connote similar content and audience appeal—characterises perhaps not naivety, as I suggested earlier, but an astute response to market forces. Jackson had self-constructed a particular sense of *auteurism* in 1989 and 1990 for commercial purposes; I shall discuss how the readings of Jackson as a film maker develop and shift diachronically in later chapters.

But while Jackson's aesthetic style and genre of preference (black comedy and splatter) were copiously—if superficially and selectively—discussed, the thematic aspects of narrative and

ideology expressed *within* the film were not explored in these promotional interviews (in part because some interviews appraising *Meet The Feebles* were conducted pre-release). Do *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles* have much, if anything, in common except their director? *Bad Taste* offered a comically ambivalent space where pakeha or alien masculinities might be variously celebrated or mocked; *Meet The Feebles* by contrast presents a multiplicity (in terms of gender, ethnic background, animal form) of carnivalesque puppets. *Bad Taste* was set in fictional Kaihoro which functioned synecdochically as ‘small-town’ New Zealand; *Feebles* is explicitly set in Wellington. Does the closed world inhabited by (predominantly grotesque) puppets—entertainers, vagrants, drug dealers—function as an alternative to, or as a microcosm of, the political heart of the nation?

The remainder of this chapter comprises three connected problems. First, I will interrogate the multicultural characterisations and the (parody of) national attributes and stereotypes, and reflect upon the film’s ambivalent ideological positioning of multiculturalism. Second, I explore the film’s use of low and grotesque bodies to determine whether *Meet The Feebles* celebrates the universal festive folk laughter of the carnival, or rather presents grotesque humour to mock the social mores that forbid us to laugh openly. Last, I suggest tentative conclusions about similarities and differences between Jackson’s first two films, and between this textual reading and the promotional representation explored above. As such, this chapter analyses two significant aspects of the filmtext in order to further the principal project of assessing Jackson’s complete oeuvre and his role and contribution as a New Zealand film maker.

Monocultural, bicultural, multicultural: metacultural

Te reo Māori has three forms (Ryan 1983: 128-9) for enumerating nouns: the singular (one), the dual (two), and the plural (three or more). In terms of contemporary social politics, people living in Aotearoa New Zealand negotiate three mutually exclusive yet dynamic perspectives of cultural blending: monoculturalism (popularly characterised as the ‘we are all one people’ attitude), biculturalism (with Maori and pakeha as equal partners in accordance with *Te Tiriti O Waitangi*), and multiculturalism (which recognises and includes every cultural group). In the previous chapter, I argued that the representations of pakeha characters in *Bad Taste* were ambivalent because they did not self-consciously examine their relationships to ‘things Maori’ and that by presenting such attitudes within a comic parody, the representations offered at

least two possible ideological readings about pakeha masculinity. *Meet The Feebles* is considerably more complex in the range of cultural representations it offers; the resulting 'metaculturalism' involves not only multiculturalism in the human sense of many cultural or national points of origin, but also combines 'realistic animals' from many species (for example, a brown fox, a human being) with 'non-realistic animals' (a manic-depressive blue elephant, a 'white' flesh-toned cow with haemorrhoids) and 'fictional animals' for which no living equivalent exists (for example, the small brightly coloured fluffy acrobats trained by Sidney elephant). A table showing key characters organised according to these degrees of verisimilitude follows:

<u>realistic</u>	<u>non-realistic</u>	<u>fictional</u>
Sebastian fox	Heidi hippo ('white')	Sidney's acrobats
Lucille seal	Sidney elephant (blue)	Seymour, Sandy's baby
Robert hedgehog	'Madame Bovine' ('white')	vagrants outside
Trevor rat	Denis anteater ('white')	living garbage eater
Bleth walrus	'Black' Rastafarian frog	
Arfur worm	'Black' worms in blues bar (Heidi's flashback)	
Barry bulldog	'Eightball' (Wynyard's flashback)	
Cedric warthog	Viet Cong (Wynyard's flashback)	
Wynyard frog	etc.	
Harry hare		
Sandy chicken		
'Masked masochist', the cockroach		
Samantha siamese		
Dr Quack		
Bluebottle fly		
and Arbee Baghwan, the human contortionist		
etc.		

These categories are for convenience only; the so-called 'realistic animal' characters are bipedal,³ clothed, not to scale, English-speaking; they might smoke cigarettes, inject heroin, have trained in Method acting or engage in unlikely sexual combinations. Their realism is thus predicated upon their apparent form, permitting 'transference' of 'animal' recognition to the puppet (see Tillis 1992).

For most Feebles their style of speech is an index of neither species nor occupation but rather exists as a seemingly arbitrary application of a recognisable national accent to provide individuality and personality to each main character. Cedric warthog's Scots accent and Samantha siamese's Southern drawl indicate neither a 'natural' Scottish or Tennessee origin for their animal referent nor any other related stereotypes of character and behaviour. The animal

³ Exceptions are Lucille seal, Bleth walrus and Arfur worm who have no legs; nevertheless, they carry themselves erect like other Feebles.

form of the puppets functions in the same unmotivated manner; there is nothing essentially hippo-esque in the way Heidi eats gâteau, or fox-like in Sebastian's choice of dance steps, but the range of animals provides character variety and oxymoronic humour and contributes directly to the film's satire. Accents also provide the technological advantage of permitting the handful of actors recording the soundtrack to voice several distinct characters each. Puppet-theorist Steve Tillis (1992: 154) notes the difficulties to the puppeteer of manipulating several voices, and cites Frank Proschan's conclusion that '[a] puppeteer who must speak for several puppets has only one natural voice, so he (*sic*) must either rely to a [great] extent on the speech stereotypes, or he must find some other way to alter radically his natural voice'. However, both Tillis and Proschan presume live puppet theatre, not six weeks of filming to a pre-recorded sound-track. The question of whether unmotivated accents and forms in *Meet The Feebles* produce variety in a neutral fashion—perhaps to suggest that any perceived verisimilitude is an illusion and thus all Feebles are non-allegorical and non-ideological but merely fanciful—can only be considered after further analysis of the film's multi- and metaculturalisms.

Since half the characters speak with 'unmarked' and naturalistic New Zealand accents, they are the most difficult to analyse in terms of national identity. Maori culture and the native animals of Aotearoa New Zealand are not represented in the Feeble chorus although three characters have exaggerated working-class 'NewZild' (that is, pakeha) accents. Sidney, who has 'ENZA' brand export apple cartons and hundreds of copies of Wellington's *Evening Post*⁴ stacked in his dressing room, wears a 'Silver Fern' athletics singlet with a cape as part of his act. Sandy chicken (with Sidney's hybrid baby son, Seymour, in a pram) represents the 'hen-pecking' female whose macho, kiwi bloke is more interested in a lager with his 'mate' Arfur than acknowledging paternal responsibilities or nurturing his intimate relationships. Sidney and Sandy are social stereotypes and the performance of their domestic troubles during the live broadcast of the Feeble show brings genuine laughter from the internal audience who believe the interchange to be a classic Hollywood screwball husband-and-wife routine and not a spontaneous dispute. The third NewZild-accented character is 'Madame Bovine', also known as Daisy cow, who stars in pornographic videos bearing titles which satirise Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous films and literature by incorporating aspects of 'bovine pornography'. For example, 'Came a Hot Fresian' (*sic*) refers to *Came a Hot Friday*, a film directed by Ian Mune from a novel by New Zealand author Ronald Hugh Morrisson; 'They Bone People' which 'won the Hooker Prize' satirises *the bone people* by Keri Hulme, winner of the internationally

⁴ Jackson worked at *Evening Post* as New Zealand's top photo engraving apprentice for three years after leaving school until NZFC supported the completion of *Bad Taste*.

prestigious Booker Prize; and 'Udder Halves' refers to *Other Halves*, dramatised by Sue McCauley from her novel and directed by John Laing. All three satirised works enjoyed commercial and critical success, in part for their depictions of developing bicultural relationships. What is the effect of mocking New Zealand culture in this manner? Perhaps Madame Bovine's videos signify the 'reversible world' topos '*à l'envers*', a trope I shall discuss in more detail with regard to satire and the carnivalesque. If *Meet The Feebles* offers in part a reverse view of the world and displays not the realm of enhanced perfection preferred by Hollywood musicals but a realm of enhanced abjection, then the lowest form of art—single-take basement video pornography—functions within the reversed world as the highest form of art. The result of the raising of the pornographic and a lowering of the elite forms is a levelling of all forms, a communal literary carnival space that functions outside the restrictions of normal official censure.

The 'multicultural' dimension within the 'metaculturalism' which describes the cross-category mixing also includes representations of colour and race. The majority of Feeble characters are 'realistically' portrayed and their fur, skin or wool makes the animals they represent clearly recognisable; these characters might be described as 'unmarked' (with one exception). The 'fictional' animal characters perhaps suggest that the Feebles's diegetic world contains more variety than the world outside; we can consider them to be ideologically neutral (that is, neither marked nor unmarked) for these purposes. Unlike the vagaries of accents scattered across the list of realistic and fictional characters, colour and race articulate aspects of the 'non-realistic' characters' personalities and their attitudes toward others in a manner that reveals the heart of the problem of multiculturalism and metaculturalism in *Meet The Feebles*.

The 'white' fleshed non-realistic characters—Heidi, Denis, and Madame Bovine—are all viewed sexually within the film; 'white' flesh (rather than hippo-coloured hide or anteater-coloured hair) offers clearer nipple and genital definition, albeit within a 'white' spectatorial culture. Naked 'white' humanesque breasts suggest a white male view of sexual desire and pleasure; this specularly is nevertheless undermined and parodied by the animal grotesquerie of Heidi's ample body. Sidney's colour does not signify race, but depression—he is a 'blue' elephant. His colour contributes to the visual joke when he claims that Seymour is not his son; the camera pans from the baby's chicken feet and lower feathers to his blue face, with ears and trunk that clearly match Sidney's. 'He's got your eyes, Sid' says Arfur, after a tactful pause.

'Whiteness' signifies sexual display; blueness indicates depression.

All 'black' characters but one appear within flashbacks. In Heidi's gâteau-enhanced flashback, the jazz band and bar attendant have dark skin tone (emphasised by the use of black-and-white cinematography), prominent lips, deep voices and Zoot suits. The 'black' snakes occupy positions of subordination to the 'white' hippo in the centre-stage spotlight. An unusual feature of Heidi's flashback is that she is seen from the internal audience's point of view, rather than remembering her view of the audience to whom she performs. Thus, the 'black' characters in Heidi's flashback serve supportive roles, not equal or important positions; but as her memory is called into question, so too, then, is the subordinate position afforded the 'black' characters (and the charm afforded Bletch) in her emotionally distorted memory. The second flashback is narrated by Wynyard who tells Robert hedgehog of his Vietnam war horror to explain his heroin dependency. Wynyard sets the scene,

WYNYARD

I saw the worst of it, kid. Tet Offensive, 1968. Charlie had our backs against the wall. There were six of us... (gunfire)... there were five of us...⁵

However, as the flashback shows, there were only four of them: Wynyard, Chuck, Jim and 'Eightball'. 'Eightball' refers to another 'Eightball' character (an American soldier in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*, named for his shaved round black head) who is shot in the leg by a Vietnamese sniper and lies wounded while the inexperienced commander decides against rescuing him; in the *Feebles* flashback Wynyard is hit by the sniper and rescued by his commander. Wynyard's 'Eightball' is ambushed and decapitated; he functions within the flashback to draw attention to the unreliability of Wynyard's memory and narrative. The Viet Cong torturers of Wynyard's nightmarish flashback (a reference to the torture scenes of Michael Cimino's *The Deerhunter*) also have exaggerated stereotyped racial features, with slanted eyes, buck-teeth and incomprehensible speech; their discussions of Communist dogma carry English subtitles, further implicating Wynyard's impossible point of view and unreliable narrative. Thus, representations of race in flashback indexes the unreliability of Wynyard's narrative position. The sole 'black' character within the *Feebles* variety troupe is a frog with dreadlocks who sings 'One Leg Missing', giving a flawless dress rehearsal. However, he is hardly an equal to the other performers; his backstage life is not explored, and neither his name nor anything else is known of this character.

⁵ This joke replays a war scene from Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life* in which the number of plates needed for cake diminishes as soldiers die in the trench.

The last character that offers the most motivated and synthesised representation of race and colour is Arbee Baghwan (whom I have listed for temporary convenience in the 'realistic' characters grouping). Arbee is the only human puppet in *Meet the Feebles*; in this reverse world the human is among the lowest forms of life. Arbee is an Indian contortionist whose personal spirituality and talents are endlessly mocked by Sebastian the director. Sebastian refers to Arbee as a 'double-jointed freak' and when Arbee's dress-rehearsal goes wrong—he slips and lodges his head firmly in his rectum—Sebastian refuses to help but instead kicks Arbee down the stairs. Later, Arbee dislodges himself, his smiling face heavily coated in excrement, only to be impaled by his own bed of nails. He is contemptuously humiliated by Sebastian and thus 'dehumanised' in two contexts: he is (mis)treated as the lowliest Feeble performer; and, more importantly, as an Indian man his humiliation has dehumanising effects with racial connotations. Although excrement like copulation and other excessive bodily functions signifies the grotesque realism of carnival, no other character suffers such degradation as Arbee in *Meet The Feebles*. Sidney's poor bladder control means he urinates on two small dogs, and Bluebottle fly eats excrement (with a silver spoon) from Harry hare's toilet bowl, but these are passing gags; only Arbee suffers such consistently derogatory treatment.

The multiculturalism produced—through the mostly arbitrary accents, the sexualised display of 'white' characters, the narrative function of 'black' or Vietnamese characters in Heidi's and Wynyard's flashback scenes, the lack of character-development afforded the keyboardist 'black' frog, and the dehumanising mockery of Arbee—is clearly ambivalent. None of these representations is politically progressive or emancipatory, but the different ways in which the characterisations are constructed offer a range of representations, some of which appear more culturally sympathetic than others.

Carnival of the Animals

A factor that contributes significantly to the humorous ambivalence of multicultural representation in *Meet The Feebles* is the film's grotesque realism. Jackson explained to Laurence Simmons (1996: 17) that,

[puppetmaker] Cameron Chittock and I were joking about the fun it would be to make a puppet movie where the puppets are actually like real people and they get to drink and smoke and have sex and they have feelings. Audiences think that *Meet The Feebles* came out of *The Muppet Show* which is actually not true; it came out of the idea of giving puppets human weaknesses and desires.

Notwithstanding Jackson's disclaimer, the Feebles' multi- and metaculturalism (with a variety of realistic, non-realistic and fictional animal characters with largely unmotivated national and regional accents) does reflect those Muppet qualities. It might be argued that Arbee Baghwan merely extrapolates the less anally-focussed but nonetheless corporeal indignities suffered by the Swedish chef, whose incompetent blend of human hands and puppet upper body characterises a sense of impossible commingling between the two forms. The oxymoronic clashes of a sexual relationship between a siamese cat and a walrus, or a chicken and an elephant, mirror the grotesque impossibilities of Miss Piggy's romance with Kermit the Frog, and Gonzo's fetishized proclivity for his chicken co-stars. But the Muppets' metaculturalism derives from its *Sesame Street* origins which promoted racial tolerance through 'fictional' animal allegory; as such, the Muppets' adult physicality is constructed to present prevailing values of romantic or marital heterosexuality, lawful activities and tasteful performances. The Feebles, by contrast, use their bodily variety not as a progressive social metaphor for acceptance of physical difference but to embody grotesque sexuality, lawlessness and poor taste. When Laurence Simmons (1996: 17) asked Peter Jackson, 'Aren't you satirising the Muppets and the tradition of cutesy kids' puppets, though?', Jackson admitted, 'We are, but we're also satirising human beings and human behaviour'. In particular, *Meet The Feebles* satirises social codes of public, moral decency by exceeding the limits of the polite body and instead emphasising what Mikhail Bakhtin described (from the medieval carnival novels of Rabelais) as 'the material bodily lower stratum' (Morris 1994: 214). In this respect, *Meet The Feebles* can be considered a carnivalesque text that, in Robert Stam's (1989: 89) summary of Bakhtin, 'glorif[ies] the excessive body that outstrips its own limits and transgresses the norms of decency'.

Rather than mimic *The Muppet Show's* family-oriented displays of singing and dancing, *Meet The Feebles* instead articulates carnivalesque strategies of sex, violence and disgusting display both on- and off-stage. While the Muppets also incorporate the intermittent violence and love-lust of Miss Piggy towards Kermit the Frog, her physical energies are contained by television's decorum: Miss Piggy never draws blood or uses weapons (unlike Heidi hippo in the *Feebles* climax) and her romantic relationship with Kermit takes neither the explicitly sexual form of Bletch and Samantha's affair nor does it compare with the multiple excesses of Harry hare with his bunny girls. In part, the positive associations of the Muppets derive from their soft appearance, a softness that is replaced by a hard-surfaced foam (which hides the action of the manipulating hand) in all but the most redeemable Feeble characters. Puppet-theorist Steve Tillis (127) concludes that '[o]ne of the many reasons for the success of the Muppets, for

example, would seem to be that their supple faces are not only capable of expressive motion, but are also rather comforting in their very softness'. Where the Muppets appear friendly and gentle, peppering their performances with familiar show-tunes, the Feebles are distanced and grotesque. The lyrics of Feeble songs include, 'I've got one leg missing/ how do I get around?', 'Sodomy, you might think it very odd of me', and a baritone aria that strings opera titles and composers' names in a bricolage that represents a Rabelaisian 'billingsgate', or excessive comic list. And, rather than a comforting softness, the Feebles present a more solid complexion, sometimes bearing the pustulating marks of sexually-transmitted disease, excrement, mucus or vomit.

Meet The Feebles revels in what Bakhtin has termed the 'material lower bodily stratum' with the functions of procreation and excrescence associated with the body's orifices and protuberances; thus, as Pam Morris (207) theorises, the 'grotesque and exaggerated images of food, excrement and the lower regions of the body are all profoundly inter-related and ambivalent'. The image of the 'lower body' is unusual within the genre of hand-manipulated puppets; generally, the lower body is kept hidden in order to maintain the illusions of transference and autonomous subjectivity. Ironically, the use of puppets allowed Jackson and Chittock to 'satirise human weaknesses' toward food, excrement, and the lower regions—through gluttony of heroin or gâteau, as well as the grotesque use of faeces, urine, vomit, pus, mucus and copulation—in a manner that only a very few directors (John Waters, Wim Wenders and Pier Paolo Pasolini are examples) have successfully achieved with human actors.

In Morris's introduction to Bakhtin's work, she describes the utopian social potential of carnival wherein the 'exaggerated bodily protuberances, the emphasis on eating and excrement... [are] elements of a complex communal perception of human life' (195). The images of grotesque matter in *Meet The Feebles* are largely, but not exclusively, gendered: the 'emphasis on eating' falls to the female characters who consume gâteau or champagne, or 'receive' (semen); the 'excrement' of urine, faeces, vomit, pus and mucus are male products. The female material and fluids of childbirth, nursing or menstruation are not discussed or displayed, although 'exaggerated bodily protuberances' are evident in Heidi's breasts, buttocks and belly, and Madame Bovine's udders and haemorrhoids. The male characters with phallic 'enormous noses'⁶ (Bakhtin, in Morris: 205) have surprisingly little 'procreative power'; Denis anteater's

⁶ The connection between the nose and the phallus has been made by others regarding Denis (p)anteater: on the internet website question-and-answer board, one fan asked Jackson if Denis was masturbating when watching Harry hare's sex games; Jackson replied that Denis's fluid leakage was merely 'snot' (Vanek: archives).

retracted genitals are comically disproportionate to his distinctive snout, and Sidney elephant's long trunk functions metonymically for his contrasting fear of sexuality and fatherhood.

Wynyard's heroin dependency positions him ambivalently between the two gendered situations; while he waits for his fix, his nose runs and his mouth develops sores, but when his drug arrives, he is feminised by the desire to consume from the phallic needle. Whether the display of grotesque bodily excess *necessarily* represents the 'complex communal perception of human life' or, as Robert Stam (94) warns, creates a 'pretext for a vacuous ludism that discerns redeeming elements even in the most degraded cultural productions and activities', is not a simple task to discern. Is the laughter of *Meet The Feebles* a communal laughter (carnival) or a divisive laughter (degradation)?

Bakhtin's conceptualisation of carnival in Rabelais's novels concentrates on the special suspension of the official power structures to produce a universal freedom of bodily display and interactions, the use of unofficial language, the levelling of class division, and the parodic satire of 'high' forms—the texts of the church, the law, politics, and 'high' art and culture. This is clearly not the same context through which *Meet The Feebles* constructs its transgressive grotesque realism: the metaculturalism of *Meet The Feebles*—the motivated and unmotivated multicultural markers of national or regional identity, the degrees of verisimilitude of the 'animals' and their oxymoronic relationships—tweaks at our cultural notions of racial and political pluralism through animal metaphor (like *The Muppet Show*), through the representations of NewZild characters and through the dehumanising treatment of Arbee. Is it a reverse world, is it a levelling through laughter, is it politically participatory, is it even funny?

Part of the difficulty with untangling the ambivalence of *Meet The Feebles* is the role played by satire of the oxymoronic genres of 'backstage' musicals and Vietnam war films. Backstage musicals contain an internal narrative—putting on a show, making a film, staging a musical—within which the show develops through its rehearsal stages towards a triumphant opening night. Jane Feuer (1986) analysed Hollywood musicals in which the mode of presentation of the internal show served to demystify (and then remystify) the technology of showbusiness or the myth of spontaneous, perfect singing and dancing, describing these musicals as 'self-reflexive'. Not all self-reflexive musicals demystify and remystify equally, however; early musicals enjoyed considerably greater mystification of the performative process. Feuer writes (1993: 90),

The backstage musical provides a textbook illustration of a genre's development from a period of experimentation in which the conventions are established (1929-33) to a classical period during which balance reigns (1933-53) to a period of reflexivity dominated by parody, contestation and even deconstruction of a genre's native tongue.

Late genre films can auto-critique the genre within which they are created. Thus, although the self-reflexive musical contains an internal narrative that permits the straining of illusion, this self-reflexivity might be given an ironic twist through the parody and deconstruction of the illusions that create not only the internal show but also the film that I watch (in this case, *Meet The Feebles*). *The Muppet Show* relies upon its sense of humour towards the failings of 'live' performance for its narrative but it does not demonstrate a sense of auto-critique for the whole enterprise of musical entertainment in the manner that late-cycle musical films have already displayed (Feuer's example is *All That Jazz* but there are others.) Thus, the relative layers of satire and parody in *Feebles* mock *The Muppet Show*, multiculturalism, the Muppets' concept of multiculturalism, the Muppets' sense of family-oriented musical entertainment in the 1970s and 1980s plus other forms of American film genres. At the same time, *Feebles* parodies and satirises not only prior objects (for example, those listed above) but also the manner by which *Meet The Feebles* (de)constructs itself as a late-cycle self-reflexive musical.

By the same token, one must also consider how the prior objects parodied and satirised might themselves be politically charged; *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Deerhunter*, for example, critique the involvement of the United States of America in the Vietnam War in different ways and during different historical moments:⁷ *Full Metal Jacket* exposes in equal measure the brutality (and futility) of the United States's military training together with the brutality (and futility) of war; *The Deerhunter* explores the impact of the war upon a patriotic American community of Russian immigrants and the impossibility of surviving war unchanged. A parody of a critique creates a palimpsest of ambivalence; it becomes difficult to discern whether Wynyard's flashback, constructed from a pastiche of film clips, locates his justification of heroin abuse in the horrors of war or in the horrors of Hollywood filmic mythmaking. Does Heidi's final *Rambo*-esque rampage ultimately recuperate the glorification of violence—that is, against the anti-violence themes that offer an ambivalent view of American values and identity in *Full Metal Jacket* and *The Deerhunter*? Or does the film's coda, closing on the static image of her new civilian role in the traditional female occupation of supermarket cashier, convey a similar ideological message of repression and conformity against the violent tendencies that film in Aotearoa New Zealand often explores (ambivalently)?

Meet The Feebles, then, offers multiple layers of parody and satire through ambivalent use of multi- and metaculturalism (based, in part, upon that of *The Muppet Show*), ambivalently

⁷ See, for example, Jeffords (1995) or Adair (1989), for analyses of how Hollywood both reflected/ reflects and shaped/ shapes the social impact of the war in the United States.

humorous grotesque realism and a satire of classical Hollywood generic forms. *Feebles* transgresses limits of good taste and offers themes of a political nature—the representations of race, culture, gender, nationality, violence, sexuality—without a consistent ideological manifesto. The narrative does not make clear, for instance, why Arbee must be a *human* contortionist, nor why he must be an *Indian* contortionist (unless it is purely to facilitate the ‘passage to India’ joke); his representation offers in Edward Said’s terms an Orientalist fantasy of Indian culture and identity. Equally unclear is whether the Wellington setting—characterised by Sidney’s *Evening Posts*, the wharf and waterfront and the ‘St James Theatre’—are affectionate nudges at the charm of the city in which Peter Jackson lives and works, or perhaps a biting satire of the inappropriately cast, bungling and corrupt pretenders of another feeble Wellington institution, New Zealand’s Parliament. The narrative and setting separate the *Feebles* from ‘the real world’ to the extent that ‘the real world’ does not exist—until the coda. In the final sequence of the film, the ‘happy ending coda’ positions the remaining characters in static poses in gardens, at a wedding, in their homes, offices and supermarkets—in other words, amongst us. The reverse world of the Feeble theatre set in an alternative (that is, realismic but not realistic) Wellington finally spills into the world of the audience, suggesting that the previously separate Feeble world is now the world of the filmic audience: either they are real or we are *Feebles* too. Thus, the ‘happy ending coda’ bursts the bubble of the Feeble illusion while, at the same time, the manner by which the coda is constructed as parody—everyone is *too* happy—leaves the ending ambivalent. The coda begs the question, ‘can a happy ending resolve all that has gone before?’, because while Heidi has been punished and the moral characters rewarded, these resolutions are not played out before us in a satisfying or convincing manner.

To return, finally, to the problem at the beginning of this chapter and consider the relationship between *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles*, the ‘one unifying thing’ or fundamental similarity is their excessive ambivalence. I mean this in two senses: the excesses—excessive gunfire, excessive vomiting, Morris Minors *ad absurdum*, excessive NewZild pakeha-ness—are ambivalently constructed and positioned, offering a stylistic excessiveness rather than a thematically meaningful excess. The ambivalence is also excessive, especially in *Meet The Feebles*. Like Fellini’s *8 1/2*, *Meet The Feebles* offers so many palimpsestic layers of parody, deconstruction and auto-critique that the consistent thread of a ‘moral’ or ‘theme’ is virtually indiscernible. Certainly, the British style of male ‘undergraduate’ humour that derives in part from *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, *The Young Ones* and *Blackadder* is consistent between *Bad Taste* and *Meet*

The Feebles. More importantly, the two films offer a 'double-voice' to their themes of violence, excess and love (or mateship, in *Bad Taste*). In a sense similar to Bakhtin's 'scholarly account of a long tradition of folk culture... [which also represented] a subversively satiric attack upon many specific aspects of official Stalinist repression' (Morris 194), Jackson's films, like Bakhtin's thesis, might be read as 'double-voiced'. The layers of surface lampoons and deeper, politically ambivalent black comedy articulate the narrative material with a meta-satire of taste and style. By presenting *Meet The Feebles* as a worthwhile film project knowing it would offend the sensibilities of audiences, critics and the NZFC, Jackson's work challenges the structures that would prohibit such film making were it not presented as it is, in the mode of the temporary suspension of official rules—that is, the black humour of the carnivalesque.

Given the thematic and structural comparisons between *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles*, I can appreciate Peter Jackson's emphasis in interviews upon comedy, laughter and fun. Rather than discuss the politically inconsistent excessive ambivalences and the manner by which his films challenge contemporary thinking about multiculturalism, decent behaviour and film making in Aotearoa New Zealand, Jackson instead re-emphasised the positive reception of *Bad Taste* in order to develop within the market a sense of consistency aligned with pleasure.

CHAPTER FOUR

'STEP RIGHT UP YOU CREEPO BASTARDS'

ANTI-NOSTALGIA IN *BRAINDEAD*

An emerging style Part One: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts

In my discussion of *Bad Taste*, I considered briefly Lawrence McDonald's analysis of Jackson's juvenilia from which I identified characteristics germane to Jackson's film making career. In *Braindead*, the model still holds. First, *Braindead* reworks American examples of genre films, mixing pastiches of Stuart Gordon's *Re-animator* (with its life-restoring luminous syringes, morgue scenes, strangling intestines and zombie blood-lust) with George Romero's *Living Dead* trilogy and the monster-mashing destruction of *Gremlins* in the kitchen (hence, the trademark on Vera's blender, 'Gremlin'). The motif of the protective talisman from a wise gypsy woman is borrowed from *The Wolfman* (also an influence for *The Frighteners*) and Lionel's gory dispatch of mutilated zombified body parts with the lawnmower creates a variation on Ash's 'groovy' chainsaw victory in Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*.¹ Second, Jackson's experimentation with hand-worked special effects continues: *Braindead*'s repulsive Sumatran Rat Monkey is produced by stop-motion animation, a technique Jackson admired as a child in Ray Harryhausen's *Sinbad* animations (Broms 1993; Simmons 1996: 13). Rapid cutting between shots which integrated model effects in *Bad Taste* smoothes the joins in *Braindead* between 'live' driving and model trams, or visually 'connects' prosthetic severed limbs and bodies. The third notable Jackson trait was a resourceful action hero originally played by Jackson (including 'Derek' in *Bad Taste*) but in *Braindead*, 'Lionel'² is played by Tim Balme; nevertheless, Jackson does appear in cameo as the incompetent assistant to Vera's embalmer. The fourth feature found in Jackson's earliest films still notable of *Braindead* is the Wellington setting, made explicit here with references to Newtown zoo and views of Wellington's bay, airport and (models of) trams.

¹ Paquita's comment to Lionel, about to euthanase Vera—'That thing is not your mother'—directly echoes *Evil Dead* 2.

² Perhaps the name 'Lionel' refers to the protagonist in the television sketch 'Sam Peckinpah's Salad Days' from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (Chapman *et al* 1989: 146-7). In this 'lyrical scene of boys in white flannels and girls in pretty dresses frolicking on a lawn', a simple picnic becomes a bloodbath after several minor accidents maim and dismember all the characters 'in slow motion, shot from several angles simultaneously as per "Zabriskie Point" (146). When interviewed by Cairns and Martin (1994: 75-6), Jackson directly attributed his filmic sense of humour to the 'Salad Days' sketch (see also Vanek: archives).

Addressed individually, these features may appear as minor quirks but considered in relation to each other, the repeated characteristics of Jackson's films constitute his personal style: a pastiche of reworked American film motifs within original narratives in New Zealand settings and characterised by a British humour associated with the carnivalesque parodies and satires of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. Each of Jackson's films combines the three ingredients—parodic references to genre movie moments, ambivalent black comedy, and New Zealand stories—in different proportions to produce distinct yet recognisably familiar flavours and textures.

In *Braindead*, and again in *The Frighteners*, Jackson visibly indulges his filmic fantasies. The 'rat monkey' is captured on 'Skull Island', 'south-west of Sumatra', the filmic source of King Kong; Jackson owns the small model of 'Kong' used for its fall from the Empire State Building (Vanek: archives) and traces his early love of fantasy and animation in part to watching the 1933 original version. *King Kong* receives the Jackson treatment in *Braindead*: the Kong equivalent is not exceptionally large or aggressive but excessively grotesque instead. Like Jackson's use of Giles in *Bad Taste*, however, his conception of the rat monkey in *Braindead* rejects positioning a screaming young blond woman as the object of monstrous desire (in contrast to the fetishistic tortures in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *King Kong*); whether Jackson's displacement of voyeurism, fetishism and torture represents a deconstructive attack on patriarchal ideology in narrative, or merely rewrites the plots in order to incorporate humour, will be considered more fully in later chapters.

Jackson includes friends in his cast, with his associate producer and editor Jamie Selkirk and son Brad Selkirk in cameos at the zoo, and partner and co-writer Fran Walsh plays a mother in the park scene. Lionel's father is played by Jim Booth, the benevolent funding official from the NZFC who gave Jackson his first 'break' financially and who worked as Jackson's producer from *Meet The Feebles* until his death in 1994.³ Similarly, the fleeting cameo by Forrest J. 'Uncle Forry' Ackerman reading the first issue of his *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine at the zoo pays homage to an important influence upon Jackson's imagination.⁴

The meaning of the examples above is personal to Jackson rather than discernible from his oeuvre; the fans who know his work in detail and his family and friends are able to see in

³ *Heavenly Creatures* is dedicated, 'For Jim', in Booth's memory. See Murray (1994: 30) and Jackson (1997) for Jackson's acknowledgment of Booth's influence.

⁴ According to Jackson, *Famous Monsters* would have just been issued in 1957. Uncle Forry's Los Angeles museum of movie memorabilia includes Wynyard, the Feeble puppet (Vanek: archives).

Jackson's work an additional layer of meaning not readily available to those who only view the films. The casual viewer might nevertheless discover filmic connections between Jackson's movies: *Meet The Feebles* and *Braindead* include the reuse of the actors Stuart Devenie ('Sebastian', now 'Father McGruder') and Brian Sargent (previously a Peter Lorre-sounding 'Trevor Rat', now a Peter Lorre-sounding 'Nazi veterinarian') are complemented by the instrumental soundtrack of Peter Dasant *et al.* Where *Meet The Feebles* borrowed an image from *Bad Taste*—an alien is clearly visible (wearing a suit and spectacles) in the Feeble audience—*Braindead* borrows a musical motif from *Meet The Feebles*: as Father McGruder meets Lionel's family, the gentle strains of Sebastian fox's phallic signature tune 'Sodomy' may be heard issuing from the chapel. This use of motifs from Jackson's films rewards the vigilant fan and comments on his prior work: the alien, reconfigured as cultured, produces two new meanings for *Bad Taste*: it can be understood either as a representative of Lord Crumb's gastronomic enterprise (thus, the alien threat of *Bad Taste* is 'true') or as an actor enjoying the Feeble show (thus, *Bad Taste* is a movie). 'Sodomy', however, brings to *Braindead* a sense of the grotesque carnival seen in *Meet The Feebles* and undermines the respectability of Father McGruder and the funeral he will shortly conduct for Vera.

After three features, then, Jackson's personal cinematic style is becoming clearer; *Bad Taste*, *Meet The Feebles* and *Braindead* share a number of similar themes, although each combines the familiar characteristics in an original and unusual manner. For example, the pure, loyal mateship of *Bad Taste*'s AIDS team contrasts the grotesque cannibalism and bottom-fetishes of aliens Lord Crumb and Robert. In *Meet The Feebles*, the developing romance between Robert and Lucille which culminates in their engagement and post-narrative marriage contrasts the grotesque sexuality of Harry's playboy bunny antics, Madame Bovine's pornographic routines, and Bletch's excessive fornication with Heidi hippo and 'Samantha the pussy'. In *Braindead* this contrast reaches its apex; for Lionel and Paquita 'there shall be one romance and it shall last forever', according to the tarot cards read by her grandmother; the contrasting grotesque sexual aberration is the repeated copulation between zombie Nurse McTavish and zombie Father McGruder, resulting in little Selwyn, born from the radio during Selwyn Toogood's popular gameshow. Nurse McTavish becomes stuck to Father McGruder's face; when Lionel separates them, the Catholic priest's lips tear away and the Nurse swallows them happily. Later, when the two tryst, the garden rake lodged through Father McGruder's midriff impales Nurse McTavish, thrusting through her body like an enormous wooden phallus. Father McGruder 'kick[ed] ass for the Lord' in life but as a zombie revokes his previous vows of celibacy. The

true love versus grotesque sex trope does not represent a fundamental binarism in Peter Wollen's terms; a structuralist analysis which seeks a simple reduction of style ignores the significance of parody and satire, pastiches and reworkings of American film sources, and Jackson's voice as a New Zealand film maker.

Jackson's grotesque comedy transgresses standards of taste with carnivalesque revelry in the 'low' body—in *Braindead*, the decomposing, fornicating, severed and bleeding body is supplemented with the visual comedy of Void's flatulent intestines detached from his bottom and plenty of dribbling redolent of Derek in *Bad Taste*. The bodily comedy Jackson employs does not 'go so low' as to display actual copulation, vomiting, defecation and so on, but instead appeals to the same grotesque 'schoolboy' or 'undergraduate' comic sensibility as *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The use of parody of 'aesthetic conventions' and satire of 'social [values]' (Neale and Krutnik, 1990: 18) adds complexity to the lower bodily humour and instils in the transgressions of taste in form and theme a reciprocal earthiness. *Braindead's* Baby Selwyn confronts aesthetic expectations that babies are pretty and placid, and social conventions that babies do not enjoy ripping women's faces apart. *Meet The Feebles* also satirised aesthetic conventions: when Harry hare prays to *The Muppet Show's* Kermit the Frog stretched out on a crucifix, *Feebles's* iconoclasy transgresses the aesthetic and social conventions of both the children's friendly puppet Frog and the religious significance of the Christian crucifix, mocking each to invert their values.

Peter Jackson is not the first director to refer to his own films, nor the first to incorporate well-known motifs and ideas from other film works. Jackson told Barbara Cairns and Helen Martin (1994: 79) that 'I don't consciously go out looking for ideas but anyone's a product of a lifetime's worth of influences and I'm the product of every movie I've ever seen'. Jackson's style is nevertheless discernible from both those of the directors of his original source material and from other directors who similarly incorporate and emulate another's work. His style is distinctive not only for the cinematic and thematic features listed above (to be developed further in Chapter Five) but also for its New Zealandness. The remainder of this chapter explores *Braindead's* implications for Jackson's oeuvre—in particular, the parodic and nostalgic representations of 'Kiwi characters' and 'Kiwiana'—in order to articulate further its representations of national identity with a fuller and more cohesive sense of Jackson's career.

Kiwiana: 'the objects and institutions that fairly reflected everyday life in New Zealand'?

Braindead opens with a drum roll and three instrumental lines of 'God Save The Queen' accompanying three visual shots: the New Zealand flag fluttering, period footage of Queen Elizabeth II in formal uniform riding (medium shot), and the Queen posed (medium close-up). The image of the Queen recalls her photograph at the beginning of *Bad Taste* (functioning as an index of the Crown department which responded to the distress call from Kaihoro) and also highlights the explicit absence of deference to authority in *Meet The Feebles*. The function of *Braindead's* prelude is different to that brief image in *Bad Taste*: here, the images of the monarch situate the text in a particular temporal and geopolitical setting—1950s New Zealand, a loyal member of the Empire—and interpellate *Braindead's* audience as a 1950s audience. In David McGill's (1989: 132) collection of childhood memories of New Zealand in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, one respondent noted,

Standing for 'God Save The Queen' at the flicks was what we considered, to use Gran's phrase, 'the living end'. So we didn't. One time I got a sharp jab in the back. I turned and this old dame was about to whack me on the head with her umbrella. I stood alright, and took off. She was muttering indignantly something about young pups having no respect.

The reassurance and hope symbolised by the youthful Queen has a different effect upon 1990s audiences: we neither slouch in childish defiance nor do we willingly stand to attention in respect for Queen and Empire. In the 1990s we sit, smile a little, and marvel at the quaintness of 1950s audiences suffering their dutiful discomfort standing in the narrow rows.

Drawing the attention of the 1990s audience to itself (and thus, to the positioned-ness of the text) is significant in *Braindead* because the nostalgia felt towards the kitsch Kiwiana and the outrageous Kiwi archetypes is evoked ironically. In 1990, some pakeha marked with trepidation the sesquicentennial commemoration of 150 years' passing since the first signing of *Te Tiriti O Waitangi*. The history of 'the birth of the nation' became not a source of celebration within the popular myth of 'we are all New Zealanders' but a site of popular struggle over representations of the colonial moment. Part of the pakeha response to the rising tensions in the few years adjacent to 1990 was to coin the term 'Kiwiana' and to embrace as part of the nation's distinctive heritage items that identified this country to the rest of the world. Richard Wolfe (1991) describes in *Kiwi: More Than a Bird* the rise of the Kiwi as an icon to distinguish New Zealanders and their products from the British, and subsequently to establish a sense of national identity.

In *Braindead*, the 1990s fascination with 1950s Kiwi culture means the period is fetishistically reproduced; Wellington critic Costa Botes (1992a) wrote in his review of *Braindead* that 'Wellington audiences will get a kick out of local boy [Peter] Jackson's re-creations of Wellington's trams and 1950s buildings. The integration of models and live action is all but seamless, a brilliant example of good old-fashioned kiwi ingenuity at work.' Mark Tierney's (1992) review in *Listener* described the Kiwiana sets as 'accurate' and 'subtle', while Brian McDonnell's (1992) otherwise negative review in *North and South* considered the 'period re-creation [to be] spot-on'. Nevertheless, Karl Quinn's (1993: 43) Australian review in *Cinema Papers* raised questions about the setting, writing that '*Braindead* is set in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1957. The specificity of the time frame is a little puzzling, given that history has, on the surface at least, no more than design significance in the film.' Quinn may be right: perhaps Jackson chose 1957 to combine *Famous Monsters* with *The Archers* purely for humour and intertextual richness. However, Jackson has answered a similar question by explaining that co-writer Stephen Sinclair grew up in late-1950s Wellington and wanted to explore the 'repressive' atmosphere he remembered (Simmons 1996: 19).

But Claudia Bell (1996: 179) condemns Kiwiana as 'instant nostalgia', warning that

'[r]esorting to cultural nostalgia is a way of excluding newcomers, and re-asserting Pakeha supremacy. The new exotic groups do not share this heritage. By reproducing Pakeha emblems of heritage and Kiwiana, we keep reminding them of this' (182).

Bell critiques replica 'Victorian' housing ornaments and 'heritage' gardening as commodified nostalgia, and conceptualises the resurrection of colonial myths of nationhood as attempts by pakeha (whose position of power and authority is under challenge from Maori and immigrants) to consolidate its fragile dominant position. She describes nostalgia as 'selective cultural archaeology' (174) and asks,

Are the threats coming from globalisation provoking this preoccupation with nostalgic versions of our culture?... Nostalgia obviously has an enormous and highly functional role in the perpetuation of national mythologies.... As an unconstructive, conservative response to contemporary society, it provides a way of accommodating dominant belief systems without challenge (181).

Thus, according to Bell, nostalgia is not merely a fashion, a commercial strategy or a longing for an uncontroversial past but can also be understood as condensing discourses of mythical national origins and qualities that are ultimately 'conservative' in nature. Nostalgia is not history; instead, it ideologically constructs a preferred version of events which can then function as a form of 'social control' (189) by offering to the 'collective fictive "us"' (184) a 'simplistic

national identity' (185). Applying Bell's ideas to *Braindead* it becomes apparent that Jackson's setting has very little to do with *history* and a great deal to do with a nostalgic deconstruction that transcends the 'design significance' to 'reinvent', in Bell's terms, 'the imagined past' to be both 'romantic' and 'uncontroversial' (167). This 'mythical vision of the past' (166) has narrative and ideological consequences in *Braindead*. Narratively speaking, as Helen Martin and Sam Edwards (1997: 161) suggest, the 'key joke is that 1950s New Zealand—quiet, parochial, nice—is the setting for all the mayhem'. The relentless normality of the setting, its seeming ordinariness, offers an unlikely backdrop to the zombie carnage that results. At the same time, the parody of 'quiet, parochial, nice' Wellington can be seen as both the most unlikely *and the most likely* setting for a zombie outbreak, implying that Wellington in the 1950s was already 'braindead'. Ideologically, the nostalgia of *Braindead* critiques the *Indiana Jones*-style raid on Sumatra for the rat monkey whose bite began the cycle of zombie devastation: Stewart's colonial desire to capture and display the exotic species is punished by Skull Island's 'evil spirits' exacting revenge. Equally, the nostalgic reconstitution of Wellington's trams, Paquita's 'Four Square' dairy, and *Aunt Daisy* on the radio ironically critiques a pakeha fictive sense of the 1950s.

Kiwi Blokes

Russell Campbell's article, 'Dismembering the Kiwi Bloke: Representations of masculinity in *Braindead*, *Desperate Remedies* and *The Piano*' contrasts different representations of masculinities in three contemporaneous films: the first is by Jackson, the second by gay directors Peter Wells and Stewart Main, and the last, by Jane Campion. In his article, Campbell asserts that film making in Aotearoa New Zealand is no longer dominated by the ideologies and representations of straight pakeha men. According to Campbell (1995: 9),

That paradigmatic figure [the Kiwi bloke], so important to pakeha men's sense of self-identity, together with the hierarchical gender and ethnic positionings which the characterisation entailed, could be sustained I believe only while a group comprising perhaps 35% of the population exerted hegemonic control over the film industry.

While stopping short of calling Jackson's film reactionary, Campbell nevertheless gestures in *Braindead*'s direction to insist that '[f]ar from undermining the premises on which the Kiwi bloke as a norm of masculinity is constructed, *Braindead* reinforces them' (6), as if Lionel's victory with the lawnmower symbolises Jackson's desire to reduce those that challenge his own straight

pakeha maleness and his right therefore (by Campbell's logic, at least) to produce straight pakeha male films. The eagerness with which Campbell praises two films which deconstruct the Kiwi bloke archetype contrasts vividly with the negative tone he adopts toward *Braindead*.

Russell Campbell's analysis raises an important question regarding the ideological message of *Braindead*'s patriarchal theme and notes that comedy was a possibly complicating factor. Campbell (6) writes,

The character of Lionel could be seen as an example of parody through exaggeration of the contradictory traits in the Kiwi bloke figure, and perhaps he is more of a butt of satire, for example, when he fulfils the expectations of assertiveness and violence we have of the Kiwi hero, than when he doesn't.

Campbell's concession that *Braindead*'s mode is 'semi-parodic' (9) or even 'ambiguous' (6) complicates his argument, particularly his position that 'structurally the film relies on the archetypal norm, which is not all that surprising given the nature of its authorship' (6). Campbell then footnotes a reference to McDonald's (1993) article but does not discuss the relevance of the reference. I read two possible implications from this reference: that *Braindead* is like *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles*—but what this authorship might mean for *Braindead* is left unexpressed—or that genre (horror/comedy, which McDonald's analysis emphasised) is an important consideration. *Bad Taste* also utilises slapstick in its action scenes: *Braindead* might alternatively be read as a parody of *Bad Taste*'s climactic chainsaw massacre and pakeha bloke characters, in which case the suggestion that *Braindead* reinforces patriarchal ideals is forcefully challenged.

Campbell's conclusion is weakened by his attempt to contrast ideological messages from three very different films. *Desperate Remedies*'s 'camp' tone amplifies and symbolises its deconstructive approach to narrative, scopophilia and gender roles, and as such its heightened sense of unrealism reinforces rather than undermines its ideological position. *The Piano* offers a feminist reworking of myths and histories of nation formation to challenge patriarchal domination of culture and gender relations. *Desperate Remedies* and *The Piano* produce spaces for social and cultural critique, but neither exploits the ambivalence of comedy and laughter.

When Jorgen Broms interviewed Peter Jackson about *Braindead*, he asked him to name the 'biggest influences' (apart from *Thunderbirds*) on his work. Jackson replied succinctly: 'Definitely *Monty Python*, the 1933 version of *King Kong* and everything by Buster Keaton' (Broms 1993).

Braindead can thus be read as Jackson's emulating and incorporating *Monty Pythonesque* satire and Buster Keaton slapstick. Lawrence McDonald (1993: 3) had also considered the transgressive and ambivalent possibilities of Jackson's comedic style, writing,

My basic starting point in looking at Jackson's oeuvre is that he is fundamentally a writer/director of comedy films.... Over the course of his three feature films, Jackson has employed three major modes of comedy: parody, satire, and slapstick. Although each of the three films uses *at least two* of these modes, it is arguable that in each case one is predominant.... *Braindead* (1992) eventually gives way to unremitting slapstick [emphasis added].

Braindead contains three modes of comedy: parody and satire of characters and narrative form (reminiscent of *Bad Taste* and *Meet The Feebles*) and a slapstick mode derived directly from Buster Keaton's silent comedies. Andrew Horton (1997: 8) sums up the comic approach to slapstick with a tip from Keaton's autobiography: "'Think slow, act fast'". Lionel acts with Keatonesque physicality: hailed by Paquita in the grocer's shop as the man of her dreams, Lionel backs out of the shop and leaps backwards into a passing tram. Lionel's swinging from the ceiling (caught by a zombie intestine) mimics the breathtaking stunt that Keaton performs hanging by a rope over a waterfall in *Our Hospitality*. Lionel's charm, grace and inept romantic nature combine in Keatonesque style which yet also expresses a pakeha caricature: the socially unsophisticated young 'dork'.

But Jackson's slapstick comedy displays a parodic streak. Keaton's hero never ran, limbs akimbo, on a pool of blood that left him sliding on the spot, never battled zombies with a lawnmower, never thrust a porcelain duck from the wall into a nurse-zombie's forehead, never pulled an Alsatian dog from his mother's gullet, and never slipped on a Buzzy Bee taking a zombie baby to the park; nevertheless, each of these tropes may be found in traditional slapstick, substituting oil for blood or a banana skin for the toy. Just as Jackson's use of slapstick has parodic qualities, so too is his parody, as McDonald observed, finally reduced to 'unremitting slapstick'. More than one ideological reading is possible if one recontextualises Russell Campbell's conclusions within the problem of irony and nostalgia; further diverse readings are made possible by incorporating a Keatonesque sense of narrative closure (indicated by Jackson's use of slapstick).

Campbell's reading of *Braindead's* final scene finds patriarchal Lionel and submissive Paquita reinforcing traditional gendered hegemonic norms and values. A nostalgic view finds that *Braindead's* ironic 1990s use of 1950s Kiwiana kitsch points out the inventedness and exclusivity of (present and past) pakeha representations of national identity; the re-creation

and 'dismemberment' (in Campbell's terms) of recognisable 'Kiwi bloke' archetypes and mythical characters thus point to their role as fantasies through which individuals connect into what Bell (184) termed the 'collective fictive "us"'. A parodic alternative to the nostalgic reading reconstitutes the cardigan-wearing, custard and cereal-cooking Lionel not as a fictive 1950s 'mummy's boy' but as a fictive 1990s 'SNAG', a sensitive new-age guy who responds to the emotional needs of his loved ones (and little baby Selwyn) only using violence when all attempts to offer peace and tranquillity (that bottle from the vet) have been thwarted. Spanish Paquita becomes not the 'oily shop-girl' of Vera's despair but represents both cultural diversity and second-wave feminism, kicking lecherous Les in the groin and using the kitchen blender to defend herself from zombies.

Paquita's Spanish background reflects the realities of transnational financial arrangements for film making in Aotearoa New Zealand. Ian Pryor (1992: 45) notes that 'proposed Spanish investment meant rethinking the project and introducing a Spanish female lead. When the stock market crashed in late 1987 the deal fell through, the writers, by now rather fond of the idea, decided to keep it'. McDonald (1993: 13) argues that Paquita's Spanishness 'enables Jackson... to sidestep the unacceptable face of ethnic tension... and indulge in a little bit of sub-Sauraesque Mediterranean colour'. Russell Campbell, on the other hand, ignores the effect of Paquita's nationality, subsuming her into his critique of Jackson's 'Kiwi bloke' narrative. As a character Paquita blends Kiwi 'Four-Square' grocery worker with Spanish romance and exoticism, but it is the pronouncement of fate (by her gypsy grandmother) that ties her to Lionel. The ending can thus be read as Lionel's abandonment of stifling mother-dominated Kiwi family values and a turn to healthier and more contemporary emotional attachments: Paquita's connection to Lionel, like the ironic, nostalgic view of Wellington, illuminates the multiplicity of cultures that must finally replace the monolithic pakeha Mother (the Queen). In this regard, perhaps Vera represents not only a nostalgic past but also the 1990s monolith of politically-preferred Kiwiana representations of pakeha identity.

Alternatively, the pair's victory can be seen as a parody of the heterosexual happy endings of Buster Keaton's energetic and complicated love comedies. Lionel wins Paquita's heart in true slapstick romantic Keaton style: compare the hapless antics of *The Balloonatic* who nonetheless succeeds in winning the modern, independent frontierswoman, *The General* rewarded with a kiss, or the forbidden lovers of *The Neighbours* whose felicitous fall into the judge's coalpit rewards their gymnastic escape from their disagreeable families with a swift wedding. Similarly,

the hero of *Our Hospitality* is married just in time to prevent the bride's father and brothers completing an historical family feud. Buster Keaton himself parodied his heroes' marital desires with the *reductio ad absurdum* of marriage-mania, *Seven Chances*—in which the hero must marry a girl, any girl, by seven o'clock that evening—and the hero's final shocked realisation in *Sherlock Jr.* that marriage is more than a wedding but also means children and responsibility.

Lionel exhibits no ambivalence towards his future, however, and despite Paquita's pleas relinquishes the protective talisman: in Keatonesque narrative style, no residue of the past remains and an unencumbered future awaits the couple. Ideologically, we can understand *Braindead*'s kitsch Kiwiana and exaggerated Kiwi bloke caricatures as nostalgic irony and thus a satire of fictive social norms. Equally, the Queen's opening prelude indicates the anachronistic and artificial nature of *Braindead*'s fantastic narrative; its heterosexual happy-ending no more indicates a reinforced patriarchal order than does the Queen's image suggest the current dominance of the British monarchy in Aotearoa New Zealand. These ideological messages are all contained within a nostalgic comedy; thus, if Russell Campbell's 'proviso that *Braindead* is a comedy of the grotesque' (6) is incorporated into ideological analysis, then the non-comedic reading that finds *Braindead* to be conservative in the interests of Kiwi bloke film making must give way to an appreciation of the manner by which comedy ambivalently undermines rather than reinforces traditional hegemonic relations of social dominance.

An emerging style Part Two: national identity and authorship

Many critics reviewing *Braindead* considered the film not only as a Jackson movie but also in context with its New Zealand contemporaries. Mark Tierney (1992: 47) hoped 'mainstream cinema [would] more openly welcome New Zealand's true film terrorist' and noted (46) that '[w]here others may fuss and agonise over how to reflect the essence of the New Zealand character on screen, Jackson manages to do it naturally and effectively without a hint of liberal angst'. Writing in Australia's *Cinema Papers*, Karl Quinn (1993) called Jackson a 'maverick goremeister' and wondered why 'Jackson has repeatedly been categorised as a filmmaker with little connection or relevance to his country', noting that Jackson's representation of New Zealand 'may not be a vision that many New Zealanders wish to perpetrate, but it is [all the same] a legitimate and specific vision [of New Zealand]'. After only three films completed, Peter Jackson's oeuvre was not only being discussed for its artistic merits (or lack of them) but

Jackson's right to configure New Zealand narratives and tell New Zealand stories in this manner was also vigorously debated.

Hans Petrovic (1992) found Jackson's work to express a 'distinctive New Zealand character' while Alan Jones (1996) evaluated *Braindead*'s contribution to the comedy-splatter genre, calling Jackson the 'Kaiser of Kiwi ketchup'. John Parker (1992: 141) called Jackson the 'commercial saviour of the present New Zealand movie industry' and argued (142) that,

We need Peter Jackson here making commercial movies presenting New Zealand, no matter how bizarrely, to the world. Let's hope he manages to resist the last Temptation of Overseasure that claimed Geoff Murphy, Sam Pillsbury, Vincent Ward, David Blyth and Roger Donaldson.

As well as the concern that Jackson would inevitably move to Hollywood, lured by single film budgets larger than the NZFC's annual grant, Parker's comments express an evaluation of Jackson's work that ranked him among other recent successful New Zealand film makers—none of whom now works from a New Zealand base. Film maker and critic Costa Botes (1992a) similarly supported Jackson's choice of style and themes, writing,

There would be those who would decry an escapist, fantastic work like this as being unworthy of public funding. The fact of the matter is that *Braindead* offers a more accurate distillation of that much mooted beast, "Kiwi culture", than any number of other more politically correct movies.... that limp around on a crutch of earnest sociopolitical trendiness, boring everyone half to death.

Costa Botes (1992b) had reviewed Jonathan Dennis and Jan Bieringa's *Film In Aotearoa New Zealand* and concluded negatively that '[a]n iron curtain of "political correctness" surrounds each and every chapter' and that '[b]lokes and populists are out'. Like Bronwen Reid (1992), who reviewed *Braindead* for *Time*, Botes voiced concern at Jackson's exclusion from Dennis and Bieringa's anthology; Botes concludes that '[Jackson's] version of culture is spelled with too little a "c"', suggesting that not only a preference for non-'bloke' films but also the editors' high-culture sensibilities work against including Jackson's work.⁵ But as Bronwen Reid noted,

His artistic status does not worry Jackson but he objects to the assumption that his films don't have a New Zealand flavor, saying that culture comes from the personalities of those who write and direct the films. "I can't help but make New Zealand films," he says.

Just what constitutes a New Zealand film—or film maker—is part of the problem this thesis

⁵ Yet *Braindead* sold to 'more than 22 countries' (Parker 1992: 141), and 'rival[led] *An Angel At My Table* as the quickest New Zealand film to turn a profit' (*Onfilm* 1992: 5), and according to Martin and Edwards (1997: 161) took (among others) New Zealand Film and Television Awards for 'Best Film, Best Director, Best Male Performance, Best Screenplay, and Best Contribution to Design (special effects)'.

seeks to clarify. It is interesting to discover that when his work is challenged by critics—or fans like ‘Furnacehead’ in the exchange quoted in Chapter One—one of Peter Jackson’s strategies is not to protest his films’ quality but instead to reiterate his nationality to recuperate his status as New Zealand film maker. In part, the desire to be recognised as a New Zealand film maker does represent a desire to be taken more seriously and to be afforded respect.

But Jackson’s work differs from that of many New Zealand film makers not only in stylistic, thematic and narrative matters but also in its self-containment. When Lawrence McDonald (1993: 15) concluded that ‘all Jackson’s films have a strongly local flavour to their comedy; their props are from our garden sheds’, he linked the films’ ‘strongly local flavour’ to the ethos of Kiwi ingenuity. This connection can be understood beyond the films’ narrative concerns to include the ‘do-it-yourself’ philosophy that enables feature films to be professionally completed here for comparatively little money. As Parker notes in his review of *Braindead*, ‘[New Zealand film promoter] John Maynard once said the best thing about New Zealand films was that all the dollars were up on the screen’ (141), that is, spent on hands-on artisanal film craft rather than maintaining bureaucratic industrial Hollywood studios. Working from his Camperdown studios in Miramar, and, after *Braindead*, not constrained by the modest NZ On Air or NZFC funding, Peter Jackson’s loyal crew is collectively self-reliant: script writing by Stephen Sinclair and Fran Walsh, Peter Dasant’s music, Richard Taylor’s prosthetics and puppets, Jamie Selkirk’s editing and Jim Booth’s production skills produce a collaborative continuity for Jackson’s film making that few if any of his compatriots can match. Thus, his call to be recognised as a New Zealand film maker challenges the local industry as well as the cinema-going public to accept a wider variety of film making styles, methods, and representations of Aotearoa New Zealand, including the nostalgic irony and parody of *Braindead*’s Kiwiana.

CHAPTER FIVE

'WE'RE NOT GOING TO BE SEPARATED'

HEAVENLY CREATURES AND PETER JACKSON'S OEUVRE

Heavenly Creatures is Peter Jackson's most internationally successful film in terms of ticket sales and critical accolades. *Creatures* is also his most discussed work, with an extensive array of texts devoted to the historical events, to other literary and sociological treatments of the events, and to Jackson's film. This intertextuality reflects *Heavenly Creatures*'s narrative source: unlike his previous films, Jackson's fourth feature originates in a number of texts, two of which—Pauline Parker's diaries (including references to her other creative writings) and the court reports of the Supreme Court trial—are inextricably interwoven as a record of the events. In the film, the textual processes of reading and writing become all-encompassing pleasures for the protagonists who incorporate textual *objets trouvés* (Mario Lanza's singing, Orson Welles's acting) into the alternative world their words create, but the girls' richly fantastic vision is at the same time both constructed *and* deconstructed (or fragmented) by the layered texts that comprise it. The foregrounding of the textual influences on Parker and Hulme implicates the viewer as reader of the girls' personal texts (realised by Jackson) and positions the girls themselves as self-constructed texts to be read; it also ironically invokes many of the competing discourses that positioned the girls in 1954—Professor Hulme's status in the University, psychologists' diagnoses—and counters them with the girls' alternative vision to draw attention to the film viewer's inevitable prior knowledge of the case.

This chapter begins by contextualising *Heavenly Creatures* within this extraordinary volume of material in order to situate my discussion of the film within Peter Jackson's oeuvre. Critical reception of *Meet The Feebles* was marked by Jackson's self-constructed commercial and artistic auteurism; contemporary discussion of *Braindead* took his auteur characteristics and status as given and emphasised the manner by which his position compared or contrasted with those of several other New Zealand film makers. Reviewers of *Heavenly Creatures*, however, have often sought to disarticulate this film from Jackson's prior work, considering its maturity and artistry to signify a shift in his film making style. In an academic example, Elizabeth Harwood's (1995: 17) thesis confines its analysis to problems of genre and dispenses with auteurism by declaring

that '[a]s *Heavenly Creatures* is based on actual people, Jackson's psyche is irrelevant'; although she is 'aware of parallels' between *Braindead* and *Heavenly Creatures*, Harwood writes that 'reviewers agree that Jackson's latter work is a departure from his previous splatter films'.¹

Harwood's approach raises two separate issues. The first is that by disregarding his 'psyche' she asserts that Jackson's personal vision is not implicated in the text; thus Harwood seems to suggest that those texts 'based on actual people' are not affected by imagination or the creative processes of authorship. By contrast my analysis begins with the film's intertextual relationships to demonstrate the impact that other discussions of Parker and Hulme has had on *Heavenly Creatures* as a creative exploration of competing discourses and texts. The second issue raised by Harwood's assumptions is that of heterogeneity in Jackson's oeuvre as a natural contraindication for auteurist analysis. The majority of this chapter considers the film within the director's oeuvre to demonstrate the similarities as well as evaluating the differences between *Heavenly Creatures* and Peter Jackson's other films, and to examine not Jackson's psyche but, more usefully, his cinematic style and thematic predilections.

Heavenly Creatures generated a plethora of texts: interviews, production reports, technical explanations of special effects, promotional articles, local and international reviews, and Internet websites. Although, as Fran Walsh told Denis Welch (1995a), the film was considered in the US to be 'an arthouse movie showing at 50 cinemas max', the film's exposure increased rapidly when Jackson and Walsh's screenplay was nominated for an Academy Award in 1995. Interest in the film spurred the search for Parker and Hulme's current whereabouts (which in turn increased interest in the film): Juliet Hulme was discovered to be Scotland-based crime writer Anne Perry, and Pauline Parker, now Hilary Nathan, was found teaching at a riding school in Kent (Cooke 1997a, b, c, d). Films are products circulated within a system of texts and signs, and *Heavenly Creatures* relies upon knowledge of 1950s Christchurch and the girls' lives for narrative meaning. Just as Jackson and Walsh's screenplay and film inevitably incorporated aspects of prior texts—Jackson replied to a fan that he and Walsh had done 'enough research to last a lifetime' (Vanek: archives)—many critics discussing the film compare court reports, transcripts and photographs of Pauline's diaries, sociological analysis by Julie Glamuzina and Alison Laurie, or Michelanne Forster's dramatisation, in order to explore 'truth' and 'fiction'.

¹ Harwood's thesis creates a feminist analysis of *Heavenly Creatures* from the theoretical positions of horror, melodrama and adolescent diary writing genres to find spaces for pleasurable female spectatorship; her method also excludes auteur approaches by concentrating on only one Jackson film.

Such an intertextual or dialogic approach can be illuminating: by comparing an episode in *Heavenly Creatures*—Juliet’s discovery of her mother, Hilda Hulme, in bed with their houseguest, Walter Perry—with the court reports (*Press* 1954c: 12) of Hilda’s testimony and Pauline’s diary² it becomes apparent that Jackson’s blending of conflicting written records is partly ironic. Hilda Hulme’s recollections given as evidence in August 1954—that Juliet said ‘The balloon has gone up’ and that Hilda offered her a cup of tea—are blended in the film with Pauline’s written version of Juliet’s memory. The diary entry for 23 April 1954 revealed that Juliet had caught them in bed, that Hilda had said ‘I suppose you want an explanation’, that she and ‘Bill’ (Walter Perry) were in love, and that ‘Dr Hulme knew all about it and that they intended to live as a threesome’. In *Heavenly Creatures*, Jackson’s scene uncovers the conflicting subjectivities of the court reports and Pauline’s diary by exploring the conflict between Hilda Hulme’s view (‘I’ve brought him a cup of tea’) and Juliet’s point of view (the two lovers caught in bed). By blending the historical records, the film scene casts doubt on Mrs Hulme’s truthfulness *and* on the narrative taken from Pauline’s diary because neither version of events is upheld as completely correct. The court report contradicts Pauline’s diary because Hilda’s view contradicted Juliet’s: in this example, *Heavenly Creatures* reveals each text and source to be positioned subjectively and open to manipulation.³ The manner by which the film appears to prioritise Pauline’s (and, by implication, Juliet’s) subjective viewpoint through diary excerpts read in voiceover has thus been revealed to be a fragile rather than a dominant specularly.

In another scene Juliet and Pauline leap from their bicycles at Ilam and run through the gardens, singing ‘The Donkey Serenade’⁴ and stripping down to their underwear. My reading of this scene is directed and mediated by the debate (Laurie 1992: 25; Forster in Calder 1993) about nudity and on-the-lips kisses in Michelanne Forster’s play, *Daughters of Heaven*, and the emphasis placed by Reginald Medlicott upon this event when diagnosing the girls’ exalted madness. Alison Laurie condemned Wellington’s Downstage theatre’s style of promotion for

² Neither girl gave evidence in defence; Mrs Hulme appeared under subpoena (*Press* 1954a, b). Few statements made by witnesses personally involved in the case were challenged.

³ Similarly, Hilda Hulme (*Press* 1954a) had insisted during the police interview with Pauline and Juliet that the brick used in the killing had not come from Ilam, corroborating Pauline and Juliet’s first statements in which they both denied Juliet’s involvement; later, Juliet admitted taking the brick from Ilam, and it is this version of events that *Heavenly Creatures* shows. Mrs Hulme was not asked about the discrepancy under oath, but she clearly preferred protecting Juliet to establishing the facts. Bill Perry had told the court that ‘[n]othing whatever’ improper happened on April 23rd, and that it ‘was so insignificant I can’t even remember the date’ (*ibid*).

⁴ Pauline wrote a book called *The Donkey Serenade* which Reginald Medlicott (*Press* 1954c) read to prepare for his diagnosis and defence statements at the Supreme Court trial. The book’s content is not recorded but the song expresses the love of a man for his mule as natural; Jackson’s use of ‘The Donkey Serenade’ articulates the girls’ adoration for Mario Lanza and their love of horses with a metaphor for their own relationship which might be read as harmless, or unnatural, depending on the predetermined expectations of the reader.

Daughters of Heaven, writing that '[l]esbian relationships for [the producers] are clearly crazy and titillating' and criticising both the production's representation of lesbian characters and the play's dramatisation of historical events.⁵ Medlicott's (1979: 113) discussion stated that the girls,

removed their outer clothing and ran amongst the bushes ecstatically. They were so ecstatic that they went home leaving these clothes behind them. When talking about this episode Pauline said that previously they had just been friends but after this there was an indissoluble bond between them.

Heavenly Creatures, then, can be read as metaphorically peeling further layers (that is, not just the 'outer' clothing) from the psychologist's report and thus suggesting that the scene was more intimate than Pauline had conceded to Medlicott. At the same time, this scene (and those later in the film portraying intimacy and lovemaking) brings into the focus the problematic representation of two adolescents who might have had lesbian experiences together or who might have instead romped harmlessly. By treating the scene as they have, Jackson and Walsh question the political motives of those who interpreted the real-life episodes as signifying madness, and others who criticised similar representations as 'titillating' and reinforcing audiences' 'lesbophobia' (Laurie 1992: 25).

As the examples above clearly demonstrated, however, where one draws the line between textual and extratextual can affect the resulting analysis and conclusions: only through a detailed knowledge of the Parker-Hulme trial do the two conflicting versions of events in Walter Perry's bedroom, or the conflicting psychological and sociopolitical analyses of historical events, become apparent.⁶ How subjectivity is produced and displayed affects the viewer's identification with the characters and determines in part how we understand the film and its exploration of events. Clearly, texts can be read in several contexts. Thinking in terms of genre, Harwood's analysis connects *Heavenly Creatures* to horror, melodrama and adolescent drama. Considering the intertextual connections (as I have, briefly, above) combines synchronic elements—other discussions at any given moment, for example Anne Perry's interviews as the film is released worldwide—with a diachronic or transhistorical view of text production, to

⁵ Jackson (Murray 1994: 21) called Forster's dramatisation 'unsympathetic towards the girls' and said that 'the play portrayed them as psychos'; to Laurence Simmons (1996: 21) he described the play as a 'misrepresentation' because of its scene 'about one of them trying to send secret letters to the other while they were in jail, which is all fantasy, it never happened'. In response to Alison Laurie's similar complaint (1992: 25), Forster replied that mixing historical with fictional dialogue and characters is part of the dramatic process, and answered that the nudity and excessive blood onstage (which Laurie had criticised) were directorial decisions beyond her script's bounds (Caldwell 1993).

⁶ In part, John Porter's website dedicated to *Heavenly Creatures* tackles this project, highlighting Jackson and Walsh's dramatic revision of events by combining close reading of the film with prior and subsequent commentary.

understand the dialogic position of *Heavenly Creatures* within a complex network of texts. A third option, which forms the basis for the remainder of this chapter, takes not the horizontal axis of genre but the vertical axis of auteurism, considering the film's place within the oeuvre.

Jackson's oeuvre under review

Harwood (1995: 17) is partly correct to assert that 'reviewers agree... [*Heavenly Creatures*] is a departure from [Peter Jackson's] previous splatter films'. *NZfilm* (1994: 4), the New Zealand Film Commission's promotional magazine, commented that 'Jackson's first three features were all horror-gore comedies. But his latest feature is a complete departure in genre'. Brian McDonnell (1998: 190) uses *Heavenly Creatures* as a 'case study' for secondary school teaching and offers the following mock essay question:

Auteur: *Heavenly Creatures* is very different from most of Peter Jackson's other films, such as *Meet The Feebles*, *Braindead*, and *The Frighteners*. Wherein lies this difference in your opinion? Which style of film do you prefer and why?

Helen Martin and Sam Edwards (1997: 177) also mix the categories of 'genre' and 'style' or tone, writing that '[*Heavenly Creatures*] marked a turning point for Peter Jackson, taking him beyond splatter into serious drama'. However, the critics were not unanimous: Alan Jones (1996) described *Heavenly Creatures* as a 'work of heartbreaking truth and beauty—the Jackson movie Jackson detractors admire even though it adheres to the same tonal formula as his entire back catalogue'; Barbara Creed (1996) found *Heavenly Creatures*, like Jackson's previous films, to be 'obsessively concerned with the ordinary and, its underside, the extraordinary' and Ann Hardy (1997: 3) noted that 'mother killing' was a regular theme, occurring in *Braindead*, *The Frighteners* and symbolically in *Bad Taste*.⁷ Michael Atkinson (1995: 33) fits somewhere between those critics finding a 'departure' and those who prefer to emphasise similarities within the oeuvre by calling *Heavenly Creatures* 'a masterpiece that simultaneously marks a quantum leap from the crude emotional syntax of zombie comedies, and expresses Jackson's topos even more eloquently'.

Critics disagreed on *Braindead*'s merits and Peter Jackson's developing role as a New

⁷ I have not explored 'mother killing' in depth as a characteristic because a Freudian analysis suited to the study of the horror genre would be more theoretically appropriate and because Jackson has revealed that this preoccupation was co-writer Fran Walsh's, and that he was more interested in the fantastic and comedic (rather than the psychoanalytical) possibilities of multiple killing (Vanek: archives).

Zealand film maker; when *Heavenly Creatures* was released many critics had to reconcile themselves to admiring Jackson's latest film, acclaiming it as a New Zealand masterpiece and stressing the ways in which it departed from his previous work. When Scott Murray (1994: 22) asked him, '[d]o you see *Heavenly Creatures* as a major departure for yourself?', Jackson replied:

It's a kind of departure and certainly everyone is going to see it as one. But I have no set plan for my career. To me it was simply that I was interested in making this film. It's something new, and that is good. But I have always seen my other films as being different from each other in certain ways. This is obviously a greater leap, however. It is a much more mainstream film; there is no doubt about that.

Jackson's answer takes a middle road which stresses the diversity of his oeuvre (for example, by referring to *Heavenly Creatures* as a 'mainstream' film) and yet substitutes the words 'kind of departure' for Murray's term, 'major departure'. It is in Jackson's interest as a film maker to extend and expand his audiences, and by articulating his prior work to his immensely successful fourth film Jackson plays down the perceived artistic discrepancies between *Creatures* and *Braindead* by suggesting that all his films are different. The ramifications of this statement are two-fold: his prior oeuvre is not unified or homogeneous, and those viewers who enjoyed *Heavenly Creatures* might also enjoy his other films (and, conversely, those enjoying his prior work might still enjoy *Creatures*). However, he acknowledges the limits of appreciation that the audience for one style of film might have regarding the others. Jackson told Laurence Simmons (1996: 17):

[*Meet The Feebles*] had a recent screening in New York after the success of *Heavenly Creatures*. Previously it had never sold to America and now the poster for *Meet The Feebles* has 'From the director of *Heavenly Creatures*' emblazoned across the top and I thought it really funny that *Heavenly Creatures* fans, all those artistic sensitive types, would be going along to *Meet The Feebles* expecting another cultural gem from New Zealand.

Jackson is right to describe *Heavenly Creatures* as a 'cultural gem from New Zealand' but *Meet The Feebles* is also a 'cultural gem', albeit a gem of a different colour, cut and lustre. Nonetheless, the anti-authoritarian and carnivalesque tone through which Jackson's films present his parodic and satirical fantasies of pakeha New Zealand is the basis of his oeuvre's consistency. Although many critics struggled to separate *Heavenly Creatures* from *Bad Taste*, *Meet The Feebles* and *Braindead* (seemingly, to make sense of their own contradictory aesthetic responses), the black comedy which gives *Heavenly Creatures* its ironic depths of tragedy and hope reiterates the 'genre', 'style' and 'tone' of Jackson's other work rather than 'marking a turning point' or signifying a 'complete departure'. Direct and detailed analysis of Jackson's six⁸ filmtexts is

⁸ Although focussing primarily on Jackson's previous films this discussion also recognises that *Heavenly Creatures* foreshadows aspects of *Forgotten Silver* and *The Frighteners*.

total sense of fantasy. The use of CGIs builds on special effects from his prior films but have been developed to realise the message of the film as well as to enhance it aesthetically.

Alongside Jackson's continued exploration of special effects, two particular spatial transitions recur in Jackson's work. First, the tilt-shot which moves from the ground-floor to Pauline's upper bedroom (as if the walls were cut away) indicating her sense of isolation recalls a similar image construction in *Meet The Feebles* when Heidi felt rejected by Bletch. Second, the Sam Raimi-like shakicam shot (used to signify evil, invisible forces in the *Evil Dead* films) that produces the imaginary Borovnians' subjective views of the sand castle at Port Levy connects this outer view to another shot revealing the inner view of the castle. The motion and angle of the dolly camera renders the editing invisible and the viewer enjoys the sense of crashing through the castle's doors and continuing up the stairs. A similarly joined pair of shots through a window brings the omnipotent viewer into the aliens' strategic centre in *Bad Taste*, and a triple construction allows the viewer to enter Patricia Bradley's attic window like the ghost of her boyfriend Johnny Bartlett.¹² In *Braindead*, the internal view is more grotesque, entering Vera's monkey bite to see the infected blood pulsing through her veins. In this regard, omniscient-style camerawork consistently intrudes into hidden or private areas to expand the viewer's understanding of the characters' subjectivity to develop sympathy or, sometimes, for grotesque humour (or both).

Another example of the girls' subjective desires represented through familiar Jackson techniques is the use of fight-scenes. In other Jackson films repeated acts of physical violence occur, and even in the reflective biographical narrative of *Forgotten Silver* Colin McKenzie's film 'Salome' exhibits Jackson's influence in subject and cinematic fighting style. In *Heavenly Creatures* only one act of direct physical violence occurs—the single murder at the film's climax—but several episodes of fantasised violence are brought to life onscreen to demonstrate the vividness of the girls' Borovnian stories and to explore the overlap between the powerlessness of the girls' real lives and the control they secretly imagine. Prince Diello decapitates the vicar (from Juliet's point of view) and skewers Dr Bennett for Pauline.¹³ The Borovnian King Charles traps

¹² Both these image constructions—the revealing two-storey tilt, and the through-the-window penetration of closed space—recall techniques used by Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*, just as high-angle craneshots recall Welles's *Touch of Evil*. The opening prologue's stock footage manipulated to locate an historical moment (images later revealed to be a facade) in *Heavenly Creatures* perhaps borrows its construction (and its irony) from *Citizen Kane*'s newsreel.

¹³ These images of violence then revealed to be fantasies recall Guido's response to a film critic who lambasts his creativity in *8 1/2*. The critic says, 'If people like you would pay some attention to the world around them, they wouldn't have so many illusions'. Guido silently raises a single finger, two men appear and the critic is led to one side, his head covered and the noose attached: they hang him. Cut to Guido: he sits with his finger in mid-air and the critic is still in his seat, undisturbed.

'Nicholas' (the Borovnian *alter ego* of John, the boarder with whom Pauline has a brief sexual affair) in the portcullis of the Borovnian castle, severing his lower limbs from his torso. The images presenting this injury connect *Heavenly Creatures* to *Braindead* because the actor—Jed Brophy—played a character suffering a similar fate with a broken panel door in *Braindead*.^{14 15} The Borovnians' sword and axe skills contrast The Boys' incompetence with blades in *Bad Taste* and Wynyard frog's wretched knife-act in *Meet The Feebles*, and recall the talisman with which Lionel rescued himself from his mother's womb in *Braindead*. The decapitation of the vicar in *Heavenly Creatures* is as swift as the machete cuts which remove Stewart's bitten limbs in *Braindead* (and more effective than the half-decapitation of Nurse McTavish), and is matched in *Forgotten Silver*'s 'Salome' by the decapitation of John The Baptist. Jackson's thematic reworking of fantasy and violence is visible in all his films. Thus, the girls' subjectively-viewed fantasies of violence in *Heavenly Creatures*—which function metaphorically within the narrative to suggest that, to their minds, killing Honora could be free of negative repercussions while resolving the immediate crisis—are nonetheless constructed with typical Peter Jackson *mise-en-scène* and black humour.

As the conclusion of the previous chapter demonstrated, romantic lovemaking contrasted with grotesque sexuality is a common theme in Jackson's films. *Heavenly Creatures*, however, is less blunt about the nature of relationships than *Meet The Feebles* or *Braindead*: Pauline's two intimate relationships are represented similarly yet signify very different feelings of abjection or romance. The encounters with John the boarder are disavowed by Pauline; to her, the contact is between the Borovnian characters 'Gina' and 'Nicholas' not Pauline and John. During the second encounter, intercourse takes place but Pauline finds the reality of her first sexual experience to be painfully unromantic and she recedes mentally into a Borovnian castle scene where a Borovnian Mario Lanza sings 'Funiculi, Funicula' and the plasticine character 'Deborah' is transformed into a smiling Juliet. However, the bounds of fantasy and reality dissolve and

¹⁴ By contrast, a similar argument that Elizabeth Moody as a teacher in *Heavenly Creatures* reprises her role as savage mother from *Braindead* is less convincing because all teachers are portrayed unsympathetically in *Heavenly Creatures*.

¹⁵ The final self-referential connection between Jackson's films is in *The Frighteners*. Dr Lucy Lynskey watches a sensationalised video of two murderers (one of whom she has just treated); on its cover are 'Parker and Hulme', twice as large as 'Bonnie and Clyde' and 'Leopold and Loeb'. (Lucy Lynskey's husband, Ray, jokes about her 'making friends with the Manson family', which connects *The Frighteners* to the Beatlemania and the 'planet of Charlie Mansons' joke in *Bad Taste*.) The photo shown is not 'Parker and Hulme' but Melanie Lynskey and Kate Winslet as Parker and Hulme*; the other couples were also the subjects of filmic treatments, namely *Bonnie and Clyde*, and *Swoon* respectively (as well as *Rope*, Hitchcock's moralising thriller). By transposing his characters into the sensationalised setting of *Murders* [sic], *Madmen & Psychopaths*, Jackson ironically compares *Heavenly Creatures* with tabloid-style media representations including the satire *Natural Born Killers* and the actual press treatment of Parker and Hulme in 1954.

* See URL <http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Studios/2194/images/reprise.jpg>

John's alter ego, 'Nicholas', enters her fantasy world calling her 'Yvonne' (Pauline's middle name used familiarly at home) instead of 'Gina'; similarly, Pauline occasionally finds herself outside her fantasy, facing not the life-sized grey plasticine figures but John's heaving body on top of her. Images of the real flesh John are interposed with those of the imagined 'Gina'—the editing pace quickening in time with John's sexual rhythm—but ultimately Pauline returns to reality, tearful and disillusioned. By contrast, the girls' 'acting out how the Saints would make love in bed' is filled with passion, sensitivity and warm kisses although the exact nature of their physical connection is not openly displayed. That Pauline's lovemaking represents Harry Lime's seduction of Juliet is made clear cinematically by her image being 'morphed' into his at the beginning of the scene, and Juliet responds as if to Lime and not Pauline. When Pauline takes her turn to be seduced, she is ravished by Charles and becomes 'Gina', retreating mentally into a Borovnian scene this time filled with an orgy of frenzied grey figures in various sexual positions and pairings. As the camera pulls back Juliet's naked upper body in the left foreground takes the place of Charles in the left background, expressing her role as his stand-in during lovemaking. The girls lie naked together and kiss briefly several times, but no other sexual intimacy is represented directly.¹⁶ Again, Jackson reconfigures a familiar theme to show the girls' subjective view: Pauline's emotionally painful heterosexual experience is construed as grotesque sexuality whereas passionate lovemaking with the Saints is portrayed as romantically satisfying (if ambiguously imaginary).

Another recognisably consistent characteristic in three of Jackson's films is Peter Dasent's atmospheric yet humorous incidental music. Like the use of special effects, fight scenes and lovemaking, the cinematic technique realises thematic concerns; the music evokes mood (the soft tones of the black-and-white ship dream) and positions the girls' subjectivity in the historical atmosphere (Mario sings his latest hit, 'When You are In Love'), but also augments the visual symbolism. 'Just A Closer Walk With Thee' is a Dixieland funeral hymn, not a girls' school assembly song, but its ironic use emphasises the links between death, travel and closeness. Beginning the film proper as the titles screen, the song connects images of the girls' flight from the murder scene, the ship dream and their separate arrival at school (immediately followed by their first meeting). 'How Much Is That Doggie In The Window' reflects the pop music of the early 1950s but also emphasises the girls' embryonic ideas of writing and film stardom with the

¹⁶ Compare the ambiguity in *Braindead*; although in the parallel action sequences Vera's blood pulses through her veins and she moans until her wound spurts pus and blood in a symbolic ejaculation onto the photograph of Lionel's father, Lionel and Paquita remain clothed as they kiss and cuddle. Perhaps this scene comments upon the effects of film censorship in the 1950s (see Churchman 1997) which, like the Hollywood Production Code, required film makers and artists to become allusory in their sexual references rather than overt (in which case Vera's spurt does represent sexual satisfaction; certainly Lionel is very cheerful next morning).

Third, the presence of strong female protagonists dominating the less visible male characters is unprecedented in Jackson's oeuvre. However, it would be an odd retelling of actual events not to prioritise either the girls', or Honora's, point of view. The girls' subjectivity is constructed and represented through the voiceover reading of excerpts from Pauline's diaries and the connection between diary passages and onscreen action. Pauline's feelings about Orson Welles's in *The Third Man* are brought to life:¹⁰ his character, Harry Lime, not only chases the girls home but also becomes a Saint, represented by Pauline's body, who ravishes Juliet as the girls 'act out' lovemaking. But although Pauline and Juliet's subjective views dominate the story, Honora's feelings also occupy narrative space: after Mrs Hulme visits Pauline's parents, Honora is left sobbing alone—an event Pauline and Juliet do not see. Seeing Honora's private sadness, the viewer feels sympathy towards her efforts to make her daughter happy (against her better judgment she permits Pauline to accept Hilda Hulme's offer and stay at Ilam for several days). Encouraging the viewer's sympathy for Honora creates dramatic tension for the climactic murder scene because although the girls' motives are acknowledged and foregrounded, their actions are clearly condemned.

Although narrative devices, plot formation and characterisation mark *Heavenly Creatures* as very different from Peter Jackson's previous films, much of the personal style and tone is retained; even the most novel of elements reflects his earlier cinematic concerns. *Heavenly Creatures* is the first of his features to include computer generated images (CGIs), and effects like the 'morphing' of Pauline and Harry Lime, or the transformation of a grassy hillside into the 'Fourth World' at Port Levy, delight the viewer as well as express the girls' excitement, imagination and sensual pleasure.¹¹ While the CGIs do not mark a substantial change in direction but rather an expansion and development of the special effects used in his previous films, the degree of character subjectivity produced by swooping camerawork and special effects separates *Heavenly Creatures* from Jackson's other work. For example, *Bad Taste* also used crane shots and various effects (such as gun flashes produced in-camera by winding back the film and re-exposing individual frames) while the puppetry and prosthetic work in *Meet The Feebles* and *Braindead* anticipate the Borovnian characters' foam rubber suits. These earlier examples, however, were predominantly cinematic 'touches' and did not convey thematic problems in the manner that *Heavenly Creatures*'s motivated camerawork expresses the girls'

¹⁰ The girls' visit to see *The Third Man* on 11 June 1954, as portrayed in the film, is not true; they saw *Trent's Last Case* instead, but Jackson chose to use *The Third Man* because Welles is unrecognisable in the other film due to large amounts of prosthetic makeup (Porter: 3/3.1.20.html).

¹¹ CGIs also corrected filmed items for historical accuracy: the original Ilam house is extensively shown, but the building has been altered since 1954 and the back balcony seen in the film no longer exists but was created by matting-in the images using computers (Murray 1994: 30).

required in order to understand whether and how *Heavenly Creatures* reflects and extends aspects of his film making and, subsequently, what insights into his other films can be gained from the resulting plethora of similarities and differences. By considering narrative form, cinematic style and repeated thematic concerns, this discussion confronts the characteristics found in Peter Jackson's films to determine the position of *Heavenly Creatures* in his oeuvre.

Heavenly Creatures as a Peter Jackson film

Viewed from an auteurist perspective, *Heavenly Creatures* combines a number of Jacksonesque characteristics with several distinctive changes. The differences between it and his other films might appear extreme and overwhelming were it not for the subtle but consistent similarities. A brief summary of his oeuvre demonstrates that variety can paradoxically provide consistency, especially in terms of narrative, plot and characterisation. The way the audience identifies with four pakeha blokes in *Bad Taste* means the final climactic chainsaw scene is both parodic and heroic; Lionel and Paquita are constructed in *Braindead* to produce a similar sense of heroism when the final zombie has been destroyed. By contrast, the audience's sympathy and identifications have been divided during the plot developments in *Meet The Feebles* so that Heidi hippo's machine-gun rampage offers an ambivalent resolution. *Forgotten Silver*'s narrative structure and deliberate manipulation of documentary techniques construct the protagonist, Colin McKenzie, and his tireless supporters, Jackson and Botes, as national heroes to be feted. In *The Frighteners*, the sexually sadistic mass murderers' violence is positioned as glory-hunting and ultimately damned as they are dragged to the fiery snake-pit of hell, whereas the scam artist redeems himself as heroic, winning the heart of the girl he saves. Like the heroic pairs of *Braindead* and *The Frighteners*, the characters of *Heavenly Creatures* also struggle with a developing evil; but, by contrast, the girls' evil to be faced is within them, and the complex relationships among the characters show the murderers to be lapsed heroes rather than essentially or irredeemably bad. Thus, *Heavenly Creatures* differs from the rest of Jackson's oeuvre but no more than the other films in it when compared with the oeuvre as a whole. Although the narrative formation, plot structure and major characterisation contain new elements, the cinematic style and tone reflect and develop features of Jackson's earlier work.

The first novel characteristic in *Heavenly Creatures* is its wraparound narrative and concomitant rejection of standard narrative progression wherein the opening established

homogeneous stasis suffers transformative conflict which is finally resolved into a new and different sense of stasis (Heath 1981: 136). Only *Bad Taste* has no flashbacks or other interruptions to disturb the narrative flow but each of Jackson's other films maintains a consistent temporal progression (allowing for flashbacks, parallel action sequences and even *Forgotten Silver's* embedded film-within-a-film). After an ersatz 1950s travelogue (skilfully edited from stock footage to emphasise the centrality of the University, the Girls' High School, the English-looking Cathedral, river and cricket pitches, the Ilam homestead and a view from Victoria Park, the bicycles, trams and rounded cars that later function metonymically to situate the key characters within the 1950s fiction of Christchurch life), the wraparound narrative opens with Pauline and Juliet running, screaming hysterically and covered in mud and blood. The objectively framed images of their running feet are intercut with their forward-facing subjective views as they crash through the shrubby undergrowth to the tea kiosk at Victoria Park. Their running feet (moving consistently from left to right) shot in late afternoon light and muted colours⁹ are matchcut to black-and-white footage of Pauline and Juliet running across the deck of a luxurious steamship, each calling out to 'Mummy'. The scenes are joined by incidental music in sound overlaps but the colour scenes additionally contain gruesome screams and grunts. When the girls arrive at the kiosk and are met by Agnes Ritchie, their faces and hair are wet with blood. The sound overlap of the hymn 'Just a Closer Walk With Thee' connects the running scene, the explanatory intertitles, and both girls' arrival at Christchurch Girls' High School two years earlier.

Thus, from its opening sequence, *Heavenly Creatures's* narrative combines and juxtaposes several versions of reality and situates the entire film within its three competing discursive structures: how Christchurch preferred to perceive and present itself (the travelogue of English-style daffodils, river-rowing, babies in gardens), how the girls imagined their lives could change (the black-and-white dream of Pauline leaving with the Hulmes), and the reality of the bloody and hysterical murder of Honora by Pauline and Juliet. From this opening prologue (a Jacksonesque structural component in all films but *Meet The Feebles*) the narrative progresses forward, integrating the fantasies of Pauline and Juliet and reserving the black-and-white footage for Pauline's dream of sailing away. Just before 'The Day of the Happy Event' the second of three black-and-white fantasy episodes occurs, in which Pauline and Juliet reach the figures at the end of the deck (Hilda and Henry Hulme) who this time turn around and smilingly embrace them both as the girls kiss. The third black-and-white scene occurs

⁹ The muted colours reflect both the girls' darkened mood (compared to the bright, almost garish colours of their previous happy fantasies) emphasised by the 'darker' music and their greyish faces, and the date: the murder occurred on the mid-winter solstice.

immediately after the girls begin to hit Honora; in diegetic time, the events overlap. In this scene, the black-and-white Juliet on the ship cries out, 'Gina, hurry', (using her familiar name for Pauline) while Pauline, among the crowd at the wharf's edge, is left further and further away from the ship by the crowd pushing forward. Thus, in this last of the three dreams, the girls are not happily together as they had imagined but instead tragically and ironically separated by Honora's murder. The film's last image, accompanied by the girls' frenzied shrieks and cries, matchcuts Pauline's distressed face beside the ship to the 'present' reality of the murder; realising not the enormity of the killing but the finality of the girls' separation, a blood-covered Pauline screams, 'No!'. By limiting his depiction of the girls' ultimate fate to just these three carefully positioned black-and-white scenes Jackson reinforces the wraparound timeline, foreshadowing the climax of the otherwise traditionally-progressing narrative to represent the interconnection of the girls' fantasies and desires upon the actual events. While other characters in Jackson's films have experienced flashbacks and *The Frighteners*'s climax overlaps past and present in Frank Bannister's extrasensory consciousness, *Heavenly Creatures* is Jackson's only film where the narrative wraps around (so that the beginning 'takes place' after the end), drawing attention to the film's circuit of closure which symbolises the characters' inability to escape their fates.

Second, the plot of *Heavenly Creatures* also differs from Peter Jackson's other films, taking its substance and subjectivity from the connections and contradictions between Pauline's diaries and other records of the historical events rather than inventing an original or fictitious storyline. The plot appears straightforward—girl meets girl, friendship develops, friendship is threatened, crisis occurs—but the narrative construction of layered realities, alternative worlds and personal impressions of events precipitates a complex story within which several characters earn the viewer's sympathy. In his previous films, Jackson's characters are judged and transgressors receive narratively-justified punishment: the aliens in *Bad Taste* are vanquished for their slaughter of Kaihoro residents; Vera Cosgrove earns a monkey bite in *Braindead* for spying on Lionel and Paquita at the zoo. But *Heavenly Creatures* significantly eschews the crime-and-punishment progressions that create and resolve dramatic tension in other Jackson films. Honora Parker has not earned the fate that awaits her in Victoria Park but instead has earned the viewer's sympathy; her death is tragic and not liberating for the protagonists nor amusing to the audience. The simple formula of 'hero' versus 'punished' in Jackson's other films is challenged in *Heavenly Creatures* because the girls (and the audience) question their right to pass judgment.

line, 'I must take a trip to California'. When she is at her most miserable, Pauline plays her record of 'E lucevan le stelle', Puccini's aria in which Tosca despairs and contemplates suicide; Juliet's aria 'Sono Andati' from Puccini's *La Bohème* tells of love but foreshadows the opera character's death from tuberculosis (a disease Juliet also battled). The 'Humming Chorus' from Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* also conveys a deeply tragic tone (it foreshadows Butterfly's loneliness and death when she had expected love and happiness) as well as producing a suffocating atmosphere for the film's pre-murder scene. The piece is performed by women but its lack of denotative lyrics means the audience can experience the penultimate scene without 'hearing' one character's thoughts over the others'. The closing song 'You'll Never Walk Alone' complements the wraparound narrative by rearticulating the theme of death with travel and walking. In his other films, Jackson has preferred an original soundtrack which prioritises non-diegetic music (except in *Meet The Feebles*) to give a distinctive sound and add depth to the main characters; for example, the songs 'Garden Of Love', and 'Spanish Moon' indicate the relationships between Bletch and Heidi, and Robert and Lucille respectively in *Feebles*, and 'Stars and Moon' provides continuity in *Braindead*'s romantic symbolism. However, the music in *Heavenly Creatures* works in a more complex manner, not merely to 'flesh out' the characters (with Dasent's atmospheric incidental soundtrack) but also ironically, to add poignancy to the themes of increasing darkness and despair.

Two other Jackson traits discussed in earlier chapters—the cameo and the anti-authoritarian aspects of grotesque realism—are also recognisable in *Heavenly Creatures*. Jackson's appearance as a clown-like tramp, kissed by an enraptured Juliet as she leaves Mario Lanza's latest film, continues the theme of comic abjection seen in *Braindead*; in *The Frighteners*, Jackson's character is onscreen for only moments, wearing a leather jacket, a bull-like nose-ring and a grim reaper T-shirt with the words, 'Rest in Pieces'. Although not listed in the credits, Jackson (Vanek: archives) contributed vocal characterisation for the ideologically-focussed Vietcong who fall like Communist dominoes in Wynyard's *Meet The Feebles* flashback.¹⁷ Jackson films can also include cameos from other members of his family: co-writer and partner Fran Walsh appears as a young mother in the park for *Braindead*, and Jackson and Walsh's young son Billy appears as a flying baby in *The Frighteners*.¹⁸

The anti-authoritarian aspect of his carnivalesque humour in *Heavenly Creatures* was in part

¹⁷ In his two other films, *Bad Taste* and *Forgotten Silver*, Jackson's roles are larger and clearer, and not merely cameos.

¹⁸ The teachers at the first assembly in *Heavenly Creatures* 'are all erstwhile classmates of the real Pauline and Juliet' (Calder 1994); crew appear as ghosts in *The Frighteners* (Vanek: archives).

indicated by Parker and Hulme's own writing and behaviour but also echoes themes in Jackson's other films. The British royal family, the Church, the school, and medical authorities each receive critical treatment from the girls. The film shows a portrait of King George VI in the classroom when the girls first meet (he died on February 6th 1952), and images of the new Queen Elizabeth II thereafter. Historically, her Coronation (June 2nd 1953) and Royal Tour (January 1954) were very significant events in New Zealand but in *Heavenly Creatures* the girls' self-construction as Borovnian royalty indicates both their delusions of grandeur and their contempt for authority; similarly, Edmund Hillary (whose successful ascent of Mount Everest coincided with the Coronation) is the object of the girls' unfunny jokes about women's underwear. The power of the Church represented in the prologue by Christchurch's central cathedral is undermined by the girls' hagiography of film Saints and their revelatory vision of an improved, Christianless heaven (the Fourth World), while the Church's influence is symbolically castrated by Diello's decapitation of the vicar. Teachers and schooling are represented as repressive and cold; Christchurch Girls' High School was, as the film depicts, over the back fence of Pauline's home in Gloucester Street, and Pauline's desire to escape such a suffocating atmosphere and to educate herself through writing novels is portrayed as understandable. Dr Bennett, who diagnoses Pauline's 'H-h-h-homosexuality', is slaughtered in her mind's eye as a 'Bloody fool!' by Diello; medicine in Juliet's view represents deliberate abandonment by her parents, which she greatly resents.

Braindead and *Bad Taste* humorously parody the historical influence of the British royal family and New Zealand's ongoing fascination with the Windsors' personal lives; the Church is satirised as impotent and ridiculous in *Meet The Feebles* by the crucified Kermit, and championed as 'Kick-arse' in *Braindead*. Schooling is not a concern of other Jackson films, but dysfunctional or repressive family environments feature in *Braindead*, *Forgotten Silver* and *The Frighteners*. Medicine is satirised as 'quackery' in *Meet The Feebles* and very nearly decapitated in *Braindead* (but recuperated as honourable if a little gullible in *The Frighteners*). Each of these examples uses elements or combinations of parody, satire and exaggeration to humorously undermine authority; distinguishing *Heavenly Creatures* is its predominantly fantastic tone which replaces the grotesque realism of bodily excesses and processes.¹⁹

One final significant consistency to be found among Peter Jackson's films is the view of pakeha New Zealand it presents. The icons of 1950s New Zealand kiwiana are not

¹⁹ Contrast the splattery 'rebirths' in *Bad Taste* or *Braindead* with the physically clean (the girls are in school uniform) but symbolically excessive birth of 'Diello' (a red velvet cushion).

foregrounded as they had been in *Braindead*, but the sense of the 'Great Kiwi Clobbering Machine' (Mitchell 1972) that represses creativity or difference is ever-present. The New Zealandness of *Heavenly Creatures* is complicated by the number of 'foreign' protagonists—Pauline's mother was English-born, her father, Tasmanian, and the Hulmes were extensively travelled Britons—which Jackson uses ironically to explore this country's formal and cultural ties to 'the Mother country'. While Pauline dreams of leaving her mediocre life with her parents (a boarding-housekeeper and a fish shop manager), the Hulmes are portrayed by Jackson as failures too. Juliet's correction of a teacher, her refusal to complete the art assignment and her fantastic story-telling at afternoon tea make Juliet all the more attractive to Pauline but the audience, like the Riepers, cringe a little at her excessive outspokenness. Hilda is not only openly adulterous but also emotionally indifferent, accompanying Henry to a conference in England while Juliet languishes in hospital with potentially fatal tuberculosis; Henry's personal and professional lives—linked in the film by a flashback during the tennis party²⁰—crumble around him. The Hulmes' failure to adapt to respectable 1950s Christchurch mores is as much to blame for the tragedy as the local social pressures to conform.

Cinematically, then, many of Peter Jackson's previously significant images and sounds are to be found in *Heavenly Creatures*. But in terms of narrative structure, the interpretation of already-existing storylines and texts, the dominance of female protagonists and a highly motivated camera, *Heavenly Creatures* appears to be a significant departure from his earlier work. Many of the cinematic devices take on thematic roles in this film, so that fighting and lovemaking scenes which seems familiar cinematically develop the girls' subjectivity and their fantasy world. This process also occurs in reverse; anti-authoritarian carnivalesque themes and attitudes which are notable in Jackson's other work are presented cinematically, highlighting the girls' mental fantasies rather than indulging in actual bodily violence (excepting the murder). Nevertheless, in producing his visual metaphors for the girls' vivid imagination and desires, Jackson retains and develops his particular techniques, devices and style, and the familiar use of black comedy to explore New Zealand cultural attitudes ultimately connects the film to Peter Jackson's larger body of work.

²⁰ The camera follows a (predictably blue and, in 1954, brand new) Morris Minor up the drive to this party.

CHAPTER SIX

'ALL AROUND WAS THE CRUMBLING DEBRIS OF A HUGE MAN-MADE STRUCTURE':

FORGOTTEN SILVER: A CENTURY OF CINEMA IN NEW ZEALAND

If *Heavenly Creatures* garnered most critical acclaim for Peter Jackson's work then *Forgotten Silver* provoked most public condemnation. Screened on a Sunday night drama timeslot in October 1995, the hour-long special on Colin McKenzie's life was (mis)taken for a documentary by many viewers. As the days passed, however, the 'hoax' was revealed and members of the public questioned the morality of the deception not least because the programme was supported by public broadcasting-fee money through NZ On Air.¹ The broadcasting magazine *Listener* and host channel Television New Zealand were similarly condemned as immoral for assisting the 'hoax' by priming the programme's credulous victims.² Disgruntled viewers compared *Forgotten Silver* to Orson Welles's Martian-invasion radio play *War of the Worlds*, whereas amused viewers who were prepared to admit their gullibility likened the 'mockumentary' to the light-hearted spoof episodes which regularly closed series of the rural innovation documentaries, *Country Calendar*.³ The public reception of *Forgotten Silver* transformed the short drama into a media event of national significance and the programme's means and effectiveness to beguile viewers continues to be discussed, particularly with regard to the moral and artistic issues raised by the pseudo-documentary format used.⁴

¹ Robinson 1997a discusses responses to the original airing and compares a New Zealand tradition of similar 'hoaxes' (see also Roscoe and Hight 1996); Robinson 1997b considers the film's ramifications for biography. See also Wakefield 1995b; Chapple 1995; Bryant 1995; Russell 1996. From Petrovic 1995b: 'Warren Sellers, tutor at the New Zealand Film and Television Training School, said in Christchurch that he was saddened senior members of the film industry were a party to a programme that mixed fictitious people in a flippant way with real film-making pioneers. The money would have been better spent making a proper documentary'.

² For example, Denis Welch's (1995b) article was possibly read 'straight' because his political commentaries, published regularly in *Listener*, are highly respected. His skill in satire, however, ought to have warned readers. TVNZ's advertising gave the appearance that *Forgotten Silver* was a documentary and not a drama programme.

³ These were often written by Burton Silver who in 1994 co-authored with Heather Busch the straight-faced 'theory of feline aesthetics', *Why Cats Paint*. For *Country Calendar* discussions, see Ford 1987; Longuet 1987; Crockett 1995; for Burton Silver's role see McLeod and O'Meagher 1988; Ralston 1995. When asked if he had chosen the date to near-mimic Welles's 31 October 1938 radio airing (or perhaps as a birthday present to himself) Peter Jackson explained that TVNZ had chosen the date and *Forgotten Silver*'s position (last) in the series (Vanek: archives).

⁴ *Forgotten Silver* provoked large volumes of comment: for criticisms and responses see Petrovic 1995b; Dixon 1995; Wakefield 1995b; Chapple 1995; 'Letters to the Editor' 1995; Bryant 1995; Russell 1996; Jutel 1996; Roscoe and Hight 1996, 1997. Cartoon parodies appeared in *Whangarei Report*, *Greymouth Star*, and *Onfilm*. For descriptions of the film making process, see Wakefield 1995a; Swain 1995; Botes 1995; Simmons 1996.

Analysis of the original airing has demonstrated how the 'hoax' was created intra- and intertextually; perhaps the playfulness of the contextual message—let the viewer beware—has warned critics away from discussing the programme as a filmtext. However, my analysis examines the text as a work in Peter Jackson's oeuvre (and not as a media event) to demonstrate that although *Forgotten Silver* was a short, collaborative television piece it nonetheless expresses many of Jackson's creative techniques and thematic preoccupations as well as explicitly connecting discourses of film history, pakeha New Zealand mythologies about national identity and auteurism.⁵ The film's subject, Colin McKenzie, is purported to have achieved many significant cinematic innovations, from pioneering feature-length fiction narratives and synchronous dialogue to producing the first colour filmstock. According to *Forgotten Silver*, Colin McKenzie corroborated Richard Pearse's previously unsubstantiated claims to controlled flight in March 1903; his brother Brooke McKenzie shot the only extant footage of New Zealand soldiers at Gallipoli during World War I. How viewers came to believe such claims has been thoroughly discussed elsewhere; so far as the two parts can be separated, however—and such an approach is problematical because *Forgotten Silver*'s message contains an admonition to observe historicity and context—my analysis focuses on what the text suggests about one hundred years of film in Aotearoa New Zealand through its personification, Colin McKenzie.

This chapter considers how *Forgotten Silver* produces a 'schizophrenic' collapse of received world film making history and a concomitant sense of collapse for New Zealanders' contributions, and explores the resulting comical deconstruction of enduring and contemporary mythologies of pakeha New Zealand's transcendent cultural and technical abilities. Like Jackson's other films, *Forgotten Silver* expresses a parodic and satirical ambivalence toward its subject; in this example, the same text both constructs and dissipates Colin McKenzie's heroism. Unlike other Jackson films, *Forgotten Silver* expresses its message formally; by mimicking and parodying documentary film, the text draws attention to its self-construction and the manipulated (not 'real' or 'neutral') nature of cinema and television. By creating a pastiche of New Zealand film making history, *Forgotten Silver* also self-parodies in two regards: first, its original context as media event positioned the televised programme within film making history (seemingly, while dismantling history), and second, the film articulates auteurism and

⁵ I do not wish to misrepresent or underemphasise the involvement by Costa Botes in *Forgotten Silver* but my discussion of the text seeks links with Peter Jackson's oeuvre rather than to attribute discrete aspects to their respective creators. Although, as I shall demonstrate later, *Forgotten Silver* can be read as eschewing the notion of the single auteur and implicating numerous historical figures in contemporary film making, it is nevertheless enlightening to consider *Forgotten Silver* within Jackson's oeuvre, articulating auteurism and national identity.

pakeha mythologies of pioneering exceptionalism (while dismantling each). By creating a new auteur through a pastiche of cinematic fragments, *Forgotten Silver* ironically undermines the concept of the single, ground-breaking auteur; at the same time, the film's pastiche collapses distinctions while paradoxically drawing attention to the significance of context in understanding history.

Documentary, pastiche, simulacrum, schizophrenia: the collapse of history

Forgotten Silver challenges received history by ascribing to Colin McKenzie several key innovations in film making techniques and materials. At the same time, the film reassembles recognisable disparate filmic elements so that Colin McKenzie's cinematic output blurs distinctions between documentary 'living pictures', fictional narratives, political drama (and black comedy); between France, America, Russia (and New Zealand); between 1895, 1913, 1944 (and 1995), and between the different careers and oeuvres of Louis Lumière, D.W. Griffith, Sergei Eisenstein (and Peter Jackson). By suggesting that McKenzie single-handedly developed crucial technical and stylistic innovations, *Forgotten Silver* depersonalises the many individual achievements which, now removed from their historical and material contexts, appear homogeneous, neutral and unremarkable. To the viewer who misses the visual and verbal punning throughout the film, the decontextualisation of technical and dramatic material is perhaps of minor concern. But for those viewers who recognise that Colin McKenzie's work pastiches and parodies the efforts of Lumière's technological adroitness, Griffith's self-claimed 'invention' of the close-up and Eisenstein's politically-charged historical dramas, the incarnation of Colin McKenzie as sole film pioneer produces ambivalent responses. The film produces pleasure as the 'informed reader' recognises the sources which *Forgotten Silver* parodies, but the pleasure remains ambivalent because the film uses its humorous pastiche to comment satirically on documentary, popular history, auteurism and the myths of pragmatic exceptionalism on which pakeha New Zealand culture is founded.

Forgotten Silver parodies numerous historical events and cinematic fragments, and represents them in miniature and out of context. For example, images and mise-en-scènes from Eisenstein's films *Ivan The Terrible* and *Battleship Potemkin* are recognisable in Colin McKenzie's epic *Salome*, while the Russian embassy attaché who in 1995 corroborates McKenzie's contract with Moscow is identified by her subtitle as 'Alexandra Nevsky' (a parody of another Eisenstein title,

Alexander Nevsky). The effect of these references is to collapse the differences between the three Eisenstein films as well as to blur the boundaries between McKenzie's use of Eisenstein material (in *Salome*) and Jackson and Botes's use (in naming the embassy character). *Battleship Potemkin* dramatised local events including the military massacre of civilians at Odessa; *Alexander Nevsky*, the story of a medieval Russian hero who defeated the Germans, was Eisenstein's first film with recorded dialogue and marked an extension of his ideas about visual montage into contrapuntal and asynchronous use of sound; and *Ivan The Terrible*, incorporating Eisenstein's only experiments with colour film, evokes metonymically through Ivan's quickly advancing age the personal toll suffered by the brilliant, visionary despot. Eisenstein's material conditions and theoretical stance toward film making, Russian attitudes both popular and official toward the films' contents, and Russian myths and history are all collapsed by *Forgotten Silver*'s pastiche.

But such deconstruction of historical and socio-political contexts can have at least two further effects: it can provoke carnivalesque laughter (through its challenges to official epistemologies and its mock crowning and uncrowning of Colin McKenzie), and it can produce insights by questioning and probing the myths and history attached to the film makers to whom *Forgotten Silver* alludes. The 'privileged position as bearers of truth and knowledge about the social world' that Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight (1997: 67) consider documentary films 'traditionally enjoyed' is not undermined—as they suggest—by mock documentaries but instead is revealed by *Forgotten Silver* to have been a sham, particularly where the privileged position is due to an assumption that documentary films are 'more true' than fictions and dramas.

Roscoe and Hight (1996, 1997) argue that *Forgotten Silver* as a media event demythologised the documentary genre by drawing attention to reading practices and deconstructing the codes by which 'truth' is constructed in documentary films. What their articles did not demonstrate, however, is that 'documentary' films are ideological and not 'real'. Their 1997 subtitle '(or, Grierson lies bleeding)', makes an unexplored reference to pioneer documentarian John Grierson⁶ who provided much of the impetus for the British Documentary Movement. According to Erik Barnouw (1974: 85),

⁶ Grierson, a Scot, was born at about the same time as *Forgotten Silver*'s Colin McKenzie, and his description of early film viewing—including Lumière's *Déjeuner de Bébé* (1895), which he falsely remembers as containing a close-up, the technique credited to Griffith more than fifteen years later (Hardy 1979: 70)—recalls *Forgotten Silver*'s account about McKenzie. However, unlike McKenzie's father, Grierson's supported film as a means to social enlightenment (because the early documentaries were unlike the theatre events barred by Calvinistic Scottish Presbyterians, Grierson notes with irony); a school headmaster, Grierson's father 'gave the first film show ever seen in educational circles in Scotland' (Hardy 1979:15).

Grierson felt... drawn to the social relevance of Russian cinema. In New York, Grierson helped prepare *The Battleship Potemkin* for American audiences. This involved some tampering with the film, and months of struggle with New York State censors.

Grierson (quoted in Hardy 1966: 16) recognised that film could be any combination of art, entertainment, education and propaganda; he was influenced by both Eisenstein (who described *Potemkin* as functioning as a drama while also 'look[in] like a newsreel of an event' (Barnouw: 62)), and by working with Robert Flaherty, an early ethnographic film maker. Eisenstein's use of (and justification for using) montage editing to construct meaning is one of several pointed references to the problematic of the medium in portraying 'reality' on film. This is one message of *Forgotten Silver*: film is not truth. No matter how convincing it appears, documentary merely assembles disjunctive images and sounds in a manner that disavows its ideological and dramatic intentions.

When Colin and Brooke McKenzie are credited with making film from flax, or inventing a portable movie camera, or creating early colour film with berries, comparisons to pioneer film making brothers Louis and Auguste Lumière are inevitable. Barnouw (1974: 6) notes that '[w]hile still a teenager [Louis] invented a new procedure for preparing photographic plates which gave such startlingly fine results that the Lumières began to manufacture plates for others' and that the brothers' '*cinématographe*, launched in 1895.... weighed only five kilograms [and].... could be carried as easily as a small suitcase'. Joost Hunningher (1996: 52) writes that after several years' photochemistry research and production, 'Louis and Auguste continued working on creating a photographic colour process. They experimented with potato flour and dyes and by 1905, they had patented Autochrome'. When *Forgotten Silver* suggests McKenzie invented the tracking shot, the close-up and the feature-length film, it draws comparisons with the work of American directors D.W. Griffith and Edwin S. Porter. By stripping the contexts from these historical moments, *Forgotten Silver* blurs the individual significance of each event so that the heterogeneity of these innovations within a century of film making is rendered in neutral and homogeneous terms. What remains is a challenge to the master-narratives of received film history because Eisenstein, Lumière and Griffith occupied very different political and historical positions and by collapsing the distinctions, *Forgotten Silver* questions whether the so-called pioneers were first (or perhaps merely better publicised than others) as well as parodying and satirising contemporary fashions for insufficiently analytical, revisionist or 'anniversary' histories.

Forgotten Silver utilises both pastiche and simulacrum. Fredric Jameson's investigation of postmodernism critiques the trend for pastiche in art because it results in the loss or 'death' of the individual artist and a 'schizophrenic' loss of meaning. Jameson (1983: 112) describes the pastiche or eclectic gathering and reassembling of another's artistic materials as an expression and extension of the 'effacement... of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture'. For example, Andy Warhol's Pop art recirculates images of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley or Mao Tse Tung using blocks of colour and repeated images in the single frame. The repetition of images—including those within the frame, the series of similar pictures and the mechanically reproduced prints—creates what Jean Baudrillard (1992: 203) called 'the models of the real without origin or reality: a hyperreal'. The excessively repeated simulation of the object produces a simulacrum, a sense that no real object or original individual exists. The sign of Mao Tse Tung is dislocated from its context and reduced to an unreal simulation, the simulacrum, in which the sign is dominated by the signifier (the image) and not the signified (what Mao Tse Tung represents). For Jameson (112), postmodern artists 'no longer "quote" such "texts" as a Joyce might have done, or a Mahler; they incorporate them, to the point where the line between high art and commercial forms seems increasingly difficult to draw'. The effect is not always humorous: while pastiche, like parody, involves the 'wearing of a stylistic mask',

[pastiche] is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic (114).

Forgotten Silver, however, uses pastiche to create parody, mocking modernist film makers (the Lumières, Griffith, Eisenstein and others) by 'incorporating' the textual references as fragments, but not recreating each source's whole and discernible 'stylistic mask'. Although Jameson sought to separate and contrast the terms 'pastiche' and 'parody' in order to discuss postmodern art and culture, the 'neutral' effect of *Forgotten Silver* is created by the pastiche of parodies. The film breaks down any sense of modernist authorship or individual technical distinctiveness but also integrates the fragments into a larger parody of the film makers' work and their roles as national heroes, and satirises the conventions of the 'century of cinema'-type potted history.

As well as combining pastiche with parody, *Forgotten Silver* breaks down a sense of history through its form, its simulacrum. Just as Warhol's painting of soup labels calls into question the role of art in a world of mass-production by drawing attention to itself, to other paintings

around it, and to people's expectations of art, *Forgotten Silver* questions the value of previous forms of documentary by simulating its codes. Baudrillard (203) argues: 'The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth—it is the truth which reveals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.' Baudrillard (203) uses Disneyland as an example to suggest that the theme park's ersatz replications and abstractions 'conceal the fact that the real is no longer real'; thus, America is so saturated with simulation that the exaggerated hyperreal simulacrum is more (not less) real and reveals contemporary truths about culture. *Forgotten Silver*, like Warhol's paintings or Disneyland, is filled with artificiality, suggesting that modernist ideas about how art represents truth must be reassessed in the postmodern world of images. For Jameson, the incorporation of fragments of solid, modernist history into a nostalgic pastiche breaks down the relationship between signifiers and destroys 'time' in much the same manner that visual pastiche and Pop art also destroyed concepts of 'space' (119). The signifier's image overrides the signified's meaning so that the ability to represent history is broken down by the 'schizophrenic' rift between the parts of the linguistic sign. Jameson considers these developments in postmodern art to be dangerous because without a sense of the past, social and cultural change cannot be understood but are trapped by 'the transformation of reality into images [and] the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents' (125).

Through its decontextualising collage of individual film pioneers, *Forgotten Silver* suggests that the modernist concepts of achievement—particularly received historical records largely filled with accolades for DWEMs (dead white European males)—are open to renegotiation. The schizophrenic loss of history that Jameson predicts does not occur in *Forgotten Silver*—although pastiche, simulacra and the questioning of modernist ideals appear throughout—because the film has a message beyond commenting on the documentary form and the uses of history in art, to parody founding myths of Kiwi exceptionalism. *Forgotten Silver*'s recombination of historical elements invokes a reconsideration of the place of Aotearoa New Zealand in world film history.

Kiwi myths, film history and auteurism in Aotearoa New Zealand

As well as collapsing any sense of the diversity of world cinema history through the intermingled pastiches of those working in film technology, documentary, social drama and fiction with pun-characters like Alexandra Nevsky and Rex Solomon, *Forgotten Silver* collapses a sense of New Zealand film history by positioning Colin McKenzie within a range of

decontextualised local events (including the parallel internal narrative describing Jackson and Botes's search for the *Salome* set). Several key events in the developing pakeha national mythology serve as reference points in the life of Colin McKenzie, the two histories seeming inextricable at times. Similarly, attributing major innovations in film to McKenzie means he embodies both national myth and cinematic history. Thus, Colin McKenzie articulates New Zealand history and film history; the humorous tone of the parody, however, leaves the viewer wondering if the ultimately myth-like nature of Colin McKenzie's impact means New Zealand's cinematic history is illusory and empty, too. Is *Forgotten Silver* a self-celebration by Jackson and Botes? Or does it encourage us to (re)discover and appreciate New Zealand's film history for ourselves?

Colin McKenzie represents the pakeha myth of 'garden shed genius' (Chapple 1995) or 'Kiwi ingenuity', a legendary ability to 'fashion literally almost anything from the proverbial "no. 8 wire"' (Riley 1995: 1).⁷ Linked in *Forgotten Silver* to Richard Pearse, the pioneer New Zealand aviator who allegedly attained powered flight before the Wright brothers in America,⁸ McKenzie's role as national hero takes on the tone of modest Kiwi outdoing brash Americans.⁹ Despite a presumed pakeha ethos of 'cultural cringe' and 'tall-poppy syndrome',¹⁰ the success of *Forgotten Silver* perhaps lies in a narcissistic desire for a local son (even a 'dead' one) to conclusively prove a New Zealander—and thus all New Zealanders, by identification—to be superior. Rather than suffering our cultural cringe—the assumption that the local is worth less when compared to the exotic—or the cutting-down-to-size that means tall poppies (high achievers) conform to mores of the anonymous masses, Colin McKenzie is hailed as 'deserv[ing] a place among the luminaries of the cinema... up there among the pantheon' (Jackson, in Welch 1995b: 32).

⁷ McKenzie and Pearse both embodied the national garden-shed handy-man ethos of the weekly rural heroes of the television show *Country Calendar* who made 'mad gadgets made out of bits of tin and No. 8 wire' (Ford 1987: 21). Shirley Horrocks's (1998) *Kiwiana: Kiwi As!* (Part Two), and Riley 1995, explore 'No. 8 wire' myths. Barr and Barr (1996: 150) apply this myth of 'No. 8 ingenuity' to Jackson's own film innovation.

⁸ Given the 'hoax' nature of *Forgotten Silver*, the issue of dates is ironic: 'March 31st [1903] is generally agreed upon [by historians], because being one day before April Fool's Day the consensus amongst some locals was that "Mad Pearse" should have waited a day, and others, when told of the flight the next day did not believe it, writing it off as an April Fool's joke!' (Riley 1995: 18).

⁹ In 1995 a 'New Zealand' team beat an 'American' team in the prestigious America's Cup yacht race (after several failed attempts). How international financial support, design and teams combine to represent a single nationality revisits the problem discussed in Chapters One and Seven regarding the nationality of films and film makers.

¹⁰ Finlay MacDonald (1997: 7) scorns the notion of 'tall poppy syndrome', writing '[New Zealanders] are, apparently, a nation of knockers, a pathologically jealous race that cannot abide those who dare to be different, brilliant or successful'. Peter Jackson, however, suggests that Colin McKenzie, a fictional character, has suffered: 'There's a lot of Colin McKenzies out there, and a lot of such backyard people are nobbled in New Zealand. They're nobbled by the "go and get a proper job" brigade. The negative reaction to our programme seems a very good example of that' (Chapple 1995).

But the articulation of McKenzie and Pearse—constructed, as it is, within a parody of futuristic digital imaging techniques from Ridley Scott's postmodern fantasy *Bladerunner*—serves two contradictory purposes: the connection lends credibility to Jackson and Botes's claims that Colin McKenzie was a technical innovator from southern New Zealand, but to do so it questions Richard Pearse's position as national hero. Mythology, however, is not constructed upon fact: in 1990, letters to *Listener* and *TV Times* commented on a television programme which included Pearse's aviation work. Two correspondents write:

[Gordon] Ogilvie... quotes letters to the Dunedin *Evening Star* (10/5/15) and *Christchurch Star* (15/9/28) from Pearse, in which [Pearse] refers to the Wright brothers being the "first to make successful flights with a motor-driven aeroplane".

When are we going to give up claiming that Richard Pearse flew before the Wright brothers? No one would deny Pearse the credit for a most determined effort.... [b]ut to claim more only makes us look foolish.

Forgotten Silver reveals what was known already: myths are narrative constructions without corroborating factual substance with which we seek to explain the world. That Colin McKenzie is a fictional character or that Richard Pearse actually lived in Geraldine makes little difference to their respective meanings within myths of pakeha achievement. Similarly, Brooke McKenzie's filming of soldiers at Gallipoli (where he later died), while parodying a New Zealand search for national roots and meaning in the First World War, nonetheless fails to demythologise Gallipoli. *Forgotten Silver* draws on these myths to create its own, but Pearse's reputation¹¹ and the role of Gallipoli in New Zealand history are not seriously threatened beyond the filmic moment. Richard Pearse's work has been received ambivalently before, and the devastating toll in Gallipoli led New Zealanders to question the value of fighting wars in Europe, yet the myths survive: rather than empty these myths of all meaning, *Forgotten Silver* incorporates pictures of real people and reconstructions of real events with narrative film images to remind us that like documentary film, history—the retelling of the past—is not pure and uncontested or naturally right,¹² but subject to mythmaking, hyperbole and the desire for wish-fulfilment.

¹¹ However, when the programme first aired, this segment created the most controversy. One viewer wrote: 'The connection with Richard Pearse was tasteless and left many in South Canterbury disappointed and angry. It may also have the effect of discounting any claim that he might have of being the first to fly, for many may now dismiss his life as part of the hoax that the film has perpetrated. Because of the damage to true documentary and the misuse of that honoured term, I, for one, after a lifetime of interest in film, have resigned my membership of the Film Society' ('Letters to the Editor' 1995: 12). Botes said of *Forgotten Silver* that he had only 'one regret. A grand-niece of Richard Pearse, the man who really may have flown before the Wright brothers, watched *Forgotten Silver* in great excitement' (Chapple 1995).

¹² The *Stan the Man in Buller* reference by Leonard Maltin to a Rodney King-style film of police brutality exemplifies the contestations over seemingly obvious images. Contrast that with the pie-in-the-face which provoked Stan's police: in 1975, Leader of the Opposition Rob Muldoon (Prime Minister six months later) was hit in the face with a jam pie at Auckland Airport. There are no photographs of this event, and it has been relegated to myth if not forgotten (see NZPA 1975a, 1975b; 'Upfront' 1995).

Forgotten Silver parodies and satirises pakeha mythologies while understating any sense of New Zealandness in McKenzie's pioneer film making. By asserting a mythical place for Colin among the international 'pantheon' and connecting him to certain historical moments and national foundation myths, the film conspicuously excludes other New Zealand film makers and any 'New Zealand feel' to McKenzie's discoveries or film work. The narration and interviews refer to film innovators like D.W. Griffith, Thomas Edison, Lumière and Charlie Chaplin but not to any New Zealand film makers: however, even a brief overview of New Zealand's cinematic past will uncover similarities with *Forgotten Silver*'s claims for Colin McKenzie. For example, the Stan the Man's location slapstick shorts mimic the format (but not the tone or subject) of the 23 local community comedies which Rudall Hayward completed between 1928 and 1930 (Price 1996: 18).¹³ Colin McKenzie's technical innovations call to mind the work of pioneers Edwin Coubray, Henry Gore and Jack Welsh, and experimental film maker Len Lye¹⁴ whose direct film making (paint on film and scratch film) Roger Horrocks (1996: 57) describes as "'No. 8 fence wire" ingenuity'.

As a potted history of film making in Aotearoa New Zealand *Forgotten Silver* seems reticent to explicitly admit to the existence of local pioneers, although perhaps the elision serves to protect Kiwi ingenuity from the lampooning and parody inflicted on Sergei Eisenstein and D.W. Griffith.¹⁵ Perhaps the lack of New Zealand film makers expresses the struggle for recognition Kiwi artists experience (even in their own land) when mass media forms are so dominated by the United States; perhaps the lack satirises a cultural cringe toward local achievements. It becomes difficult to draw conclusions about the text's message in regard to the role of past or present New Zealand film makers for two connected reasons: first, Peter Jackson is a well-known New Zealand film maker, and since Jackson is the only local film maker named¹⁶ in

¹³ Price (44) notes that Lee Hill, the cinematographer for the first New Zealand talking film, *Down on the Farm*, also made "'quickie comedies" in direct competition with Hayward'.

¹⁴ Lye's film making career began after he left New Zealand but his work in cinema and kinetic sculpture is preserved in, and inextricably associated with, New Zealand.

¹⁵ In *Salome*, John The Baptist's hair and beard are straggly versions of Ivan The Terrible's stylized coiff, but the wild glare remains intact; *Salome* also borrows heavily from *Judith of Bethulia*, although McKenzie's temptress wears a Wonderbra.

¹⁶ Costa Botes's first feature film was released in 1998 and at the time of *Forgotten Silver*, Botes was more widely known as a Wellington film critic than as a film maker. John O'Shea is mentioned in *Forgotten Silver* but as an editor for McKenzie and not in relation to his own contribution to New Zealand film making; similarly, Sam Neill is labelled 'Actor/Director' but the directing reference is invoked primarily to give credence to his story about Stan the Man. Another reading of these contributors is possible, however; some New Zealand film makers choose to work in New Zealand (unlike Geoff Murphy, Roger Donaldson, Jane Campion or Lee Tamahori) but receive little recognition compared to the large-scale, international directors of recent times. The star-like status of the auteur becomes a double-edged sword: Peter Jackson's renown puts New Zealand film making on the international scene but those artists without his commercially attractive style remain unknown. Perhaps these New Zealand innovators are the Colin McKenzies 'nobbled by the get-a-proper-job brigade' (Jackson in Chapple 1995).

Forgotten Silver, comparisons between his oeuvre and role as New Zealand auteur and McKenzie's, are both inevitable and difficult to resolve. Second, *Forgotten Silver* displays Jackson's characteristic style of ambivalent, black comedy. The text appears to contain clues but, like all other details within the film, these might yet be revealed as red herrings and in-jokes: Jackson's film making influence is clearly visible, but whether *Forgotten Silver* represents (or disavows) Peter Jackson as a mythic New Zealand auteur is less easily determined.

Forgotten Silver contains fragments of Jackson's other films and, as such, offers a self-referential parody of his oeuvre. The parody mocks aesthetic conventions by breaching limits between Jackson's films, his life, and Colin McKenzie's *Salome*. For example, *Bad Taste* is evoked when Jackson begins *Forgotten Silver* by leading the camera to a shed in Pukerua Bay, the small seaside town where Jackson grew up; in the shed is a chest containing a dead man's filmic achievements, rather like the chest hidden in the attic containing Lionel's father's secrets in *Braindead*. As the trampers chop their way through the native bush on the West Coast, the bush recalls *Bad Taste* and Wynyard's flashback in *Meet The Feebles*¹⁷ while Jackson's long-handled, angle-tipped machete looks very like that used to sever Stewart's bitten limbs in *Braindead*. The parody becomes more mocking of auteurism or any sense of individual style when McKenzie's vault is opened: a tall grey figure, shot from a low angle, clearly resembles and parodies the Borovnian noblemen of *Heavenly Creatures*. The finished *Salome*—shown at the Embassy theatre, a grand old-style cinema in Wellington which Jackson and others campaigned to maintain and restore—includes two Borovnian-style statues amid a Jacksonesque fight sequence. The black comedic tone of Jackson's films also permeates *Forgotten Silver*: the parody of pakeha masculinities and deconstruction of myths of capable men that characterised *Bad Taste* is mingled with the disrespectful tone of *Meet The Feebles*, particularly when showing the myths of nation-forming wars to have been fed by filmic constructions. *Braindead*'s satire of Kiwi nostalgia, the fantasy-cum-tragedy of *Heavenly Creatures* and the collaborative deceptiveness of Frank Bannister's ghosts in *The Frighteners* are themes replayed in the satire of national-hero myths, the fantasy realm of *Salome* and the parallel tragedy of Maybelle's death, and the conspiracy between Jackson, Botes, Maltin, Harvey Weinstein, Sam Neill and others. The matte-shots and special effects (in this case, to make the film look old, not magical or ghostly (see Botes 1995)) are techniques Jackson developed throughout his oeuvre; the mythical abilities of Colin McKenzie for *bricolage* (making do with whatever is to hand) and innovation can be seen

¹⁷ The bush has two uses here: a New Zealand mythological trope, the bush represents the repressed dark heart of native country transcended by colonial men (who hack at it senselessly to reclaim space for civilisation); the 'primordial' bush also refers to Jackson's favourite film, *King Kong* (rumoured, from the time *Forgotten Silver* was made, to be Jackson's next project after *The Frighteners*); see Barr and Barr 1996; Campbell 1997; Espiner 1997.

to reflect Jackson's film making talents, too.

In detail, theme and tone, *Forgotten Silver* can be read as fitting the pattern of his oeuvre as much as any other Peter Jackson film. However, *Forgotten Silver* comments on film making—with its pastiche of international innovators and auteurs—and more significantly, addresses film making in New Zealand. The ambivalent tone which marks the fictive plot and setting means that like *Bad Taste*, *Forgotten Silver* both constructs and deconstructs a predominantly pakeha masculine narrative. Does *Forgotten Silver* celebrate the achievements of the pakeha male film maker? Yes, but its comedic tone means it represents the achievements and the film makers as myths, as part of a history that New Zealanders would like to believe in, as a fiction which satirises this country's desire to be recognised and taken seriously while nevertheless cringing from the cultural heritage our past does contain. Thus, the McKenzies' 'colour test', filled with images of topless young Tahitian women, lampoons and compares Victorian and contemporary censure of nudity and natural sexuality as well as symbolically representing Maori (and therefore, metonymically, acknowledging the cultural taboos on filming or displaying topless *wāhine*) to draw comparisons between colonial and current attitudes which permit pakeha myths, histories and personalities to overshadow those of Maori. Colin McKenzie expresses an anachronistic version of New Zealand's past; by contrast, Peter Jackson's parodic and satirical tones expose the anachronisms—and the revisions of the past which locate Colin McKenzie-types as anachronisms—to critique, maintaining an ambivalence which resists turning humour into ideology but instead challenges a range of contemporary social and cultural political values.

Ultimately, Colin McKenzie is not Peter Jackson: McKenzie languished in exile without the recognition he deserved but Jackson remains, his renown enlarged—ironically—by McKenzie's failure. *Forgotten Silver* marks Jackson's sophisticated exploration of the artistic boundaries of trickery and technique, narrative and the author as subject. While those examples explore their own origins and construction and *Forgotten Silver* ostensibly reconstructs not itself but *Salome*, its pastiche of fragments works similarly to break down the separation between writer, director, explorer, actor, innovator and subject. The film exposes as constructions the subject (Colin McKenzie), the authors (Jackson and Botes), documentary and drama, world film history, auteurism and pakeha mythologies of national heroes (although treasured myths remain unscathed). The final shot over which the credits scroll shows Colin McKenzie photographing his image in a mirror, silver upon silver, reflecting the film maker and the apparatus while also

indicating with words the people involved in his creation. Thus, the auteur is a mirage constructed out of the business of film making, a myth which, Jackson suggests (through parody and pastiche), incorrectly attributes to one person one hundred years of international creativity as well as disavowing the local forgotten silver, the innovations and adaptations made by pioneer film makers in Aotearoa New Zealand since cinema began.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'THIS RECORD SHOULD BE HELD BY AN AMERICAN' *THE FRIGHTENERS*: AUTHENTICITY, MIMICRY, PARODY.

Peter Jackson's most recent film, *The Frighteners*, develops cinematic techniques and thematic concerns found in his other films. It incorporates crane shots, Wellesian and Raimiesque camera movement, particular fight scene tropes, home-made special effects and the pastiche of American genre films, and returns to themes of grotesque realism and romance, parody of authority figures, and the hapless hero triumphing against dark forces; but, like each of Jackson's five previous films, *The Frighteners* nevertheless retains its own distinctive flavour. Its American setting and characters distinguishes *The Frighteners* from Jackson's parodies of pakeha identity myths, but its recognisable Aotearoa New Zealand backgrounds and familiar local actors destabilise any cohesive or authentic sense of 'Americanness' (to New Zealand viewers, at least). The film's American/New Zealand filmic hybridity reflects its Universal Films/WingNut Films co-production, and although it replicates the signs of an American film (with left-hand drive cars and Hollywood actors), *The Frighteners*'s palimpsestic ambivalence expresses two aspects significant to understanding Jackson's role as New Zealand film maker. First, the diverse films that comprise his previous oeuvre have consistently addressed exclusively New Zealand topics with a personal cinematic style and parodic tone that allows the group to cohere as recognisably Jackson's; in this regard, *The Frighteners* expands his range beyond solely New Zealand-based narratives while reasserting his distinctive style. Second, the film marks Jackson's relationship with Universal Pictures but unlike other Kiwis who have made recent forays into Hollywood studio film making—for example, Geoff Murphy, Roger Donaldson, Vincent Ward, Jane Campion or Lee Tamahori—Jackson worked from his own studios in Wellington.

The Frighteners can be read ambivalently because it both compares to and differs from Jackson's other films, expressing the now-familiar ideas and characteristics of this New Zealand auteur but recontextualising local ingredients (for example, the Port Hills scenery of *Heavenly Creatures*) for an American narrative. At the same time, Jackson's creation of *The Frighteners* in New Zealand invokes questions about the bounds—and thus the meaning and

meaningfulness—of national cinema. ‘Hollywood backlot’ arguments (Reid 1986) were raised in the 1980s against encouraging American-resourced film making in New Zealand on the grounds that such activity merely reinforced the United States’s perceived status as a cultural imperialist power by exploiting New Zealand’s ‘untouched’ locations and cheap, relatively deregulated labour force. More recently, local government bodies have actively sought international film or television contracts (see Courtney 1996; Russell 1997), anticipating that offshore capital will generate employment, training and flow-on commercial benefits for New Zealand’s relatively small film industry. This thesis cannot resolve wider questions about whether accusations of cultural imperialism and exploitation oversimplify and overemphasise ‘the nation’ in the predominantly industrial transactions between private international film making concerns; nor can this discussion assess in general terms the cultural, social, political and economic balance required between the potential benefits of capital from external sources on the one hand and the local interests to be served by a truly indigenous film industry on the other. Instead, this chapter addresses the significance of Jackson’s success in negotiating both a phenomenal Hollywood budget and his choice of New Zealand facilities, actors and crew, and returns to the question raised in the Introduction: What is ‘a New Zealand film maker’? And what does it mean—not only to him, but to New Zealand and to the world—when Peter Jackson says he is one?

The Frighteners as a Peter Jackson film

Jackson’s cinematic and thematic techniques in *The Frighteners* reproduce those developed in his earlier films (discussed in detail in Chapter Five). For example, the prelude scene uses a Wellesian continuous camera motion to disguise cuts between exterior/interior and attic/hallway shots to produce an omniscient view of the lovers’ game. Fight scenes reproduce characteristic Jacksonesque battles—Ray and the Judge are severed through the midriff and Hiles is split in two vertically, recalling similar violent ‘deaths’ to *Braindead* zombies and *Heavenly Creatures*’s Borovnians—although *The Frighteners* used more computer-generated special effects and fewer prosthetics or models. *The Frighteners* contains a cameo by the director (and one by his son); technical staff¹ from the art and animation departments take small roles and Jackson’s and Fox’s personal assistants appear briefly, as nuns. Jackson also incorporates friends’ names for characters; hence the names ‘Lynskey’, ‘Hiles’, and ‘Harry Sinclair’ refer to

¹ For example, an orderly is played by George Port, the CGI animator for *Heavenly Creatures* and director of short film *Valley of the Stereos* which Jackson produced in 1992.

Melanie Lynskey, Tony Hiles, and Harry Sinclair respectively.² Aotearoa New Zealand's distinctive landscape features prominently as Jackson combines Lyttelton and Wellington locations; the film demands a small California town setting (with US Mail boxes, the Sheriff's Office, the FBI and the electric chair), but, nonetheless, the mise-en-scène also resembles Peter Jackson's previous films. The manicured lawn and garden gnome, cemetery scenes and reanimated dead which characterised *Braindead* reappear in *The Frighteners*; the hills around Lyttelton, a brightly-coloured jester inside a Borovnian-style castle (the restaurant) and the *Murders, Madmen and Psychopaths* video cover invoke the mise-en-scène of *Heavenly Creatures*. Cinematically, then, Jackson's stylistic imprint is clearly visible in *The Frighteners* despite its American setting and narrative.

Familiar themes appear in *The Frighteners* although the grotesque realism and excessive blood'n'guts of previous films are recast as sight gags and psychological horror. Stuart 'vomits' through his ears and the Judge's dog steals his jawbone, but rather than transgress limits of taste to provoke laughter (consider Harry hare's vomiting in *Meet The Feebles* and Void's disintegration in *Braindead*), the few examples of grotesque realism seem intended as vehicles for computer-generated effects rather than as challenges to aesthetic or social conventions. Excessive violence against aliens, Feebles and zombies was made humorous through splatstick buffoonery, parody and satire; in *Heavenly Creatures*, a complex interplay of identifications positioned Honora's killing as immoral and tragic. In *The Frighteners*, victims meet different ends depending on their physical state: Jackson's preferred Monty Python-influenced splatstick dismemberment awaits the ghosts, but Johnny and Patricia stalk and execute their human victims in a non-comedic horror-film manner not encountered in other Jackson films. Characteristic distinctions between romantic love and grotesque sexuality are maintained: Frank and Lucy's budding friendship contrasts the long-standing horror fetish between sadistic pleasure-seekers Patricia and Johnny.

As well as visual and thematic recurrences, Jackson's cinematic humour continues to be marked by pastiche and parody, developing further cohesion within the oeuvre. Jackson said in 1992 that 'I don't consciously go out looking for ideas but anyone's a product of a lifetime's worth of influences and I'm the product of every movie I've ever seen' (Cairns and Martin 1994: 79). Four years later, *The Frighteners* combined references to attention-seeking ultraviolence from

² Tony Hiles worked on several Jackson films and made *Good Taste Made Bad Taste* to document the four-year making of *Bad Taste*; Jackson was executive producer for Hiles's debut feature, *Jack Brown, Genius*. Harry Sinclair acted in *Braindead* and, as one of *The Muttonbirds*, recorded *The Frighteners*'s closer, 'Don't Fear The Reaper'.

Natural Born Killers with ironic parodies of *Ghost* and *Ghostbusters*, plot progressions from *The Shining* and *Carrie* and visual effects borrowed from *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2*. Jackson's reworking of American films connects *The Frighteners* to his other work rather than marking a shift to new ideas; his pastiche of reconfigured American genre film moments recalls his earlier comedic use of chainsaw horror and commandos in *Bad Taste*, musicals and war films in *Meet The Feebles*, and 1980s horror and zombie movies in *Braindead*. In *Forgotten Silver* the combination of film pastiches created a new ironic history of cinema by decontextualising and satirising often-revered film moments; in *The Frighteners*, the combination of references to American genre films works paradoxically to re-emphasise as characteristic Jackson's incorporation of textual borrowings into his New Zealand narratives while also functioning within the mise-en-scène to replicate visual and verbal signifiers which authenticate *The Frighteners* as 'American'.

Jackson's choice of lead actors exploits resonances with their prior work to add another dimension to the pastiches. Dee Wallace Stone's former performances included *The Howling*, a film derived from George Waggner's *The Wolf Man* in which a mysterious inverted pentagram on the hand or forehead signified the werewolf's next victim (in *The Frighteners*, the sign is a number carved by Wallace Stone's character). Jeffrey Combs, playing an FBI agent with bizarre psychological obsessions, embodies Jackson's second homage to the *Re-Animator* films (in which Combs played a doctor experimenting with raising the dead). *The Frighteners* and *Meet The Feebles* are linked through both films' parodies of the Vietnam War film *Full Metal Jacket*; in *The Frighteners*, R. Lee Ermey reprises his *Full Metal Jacket* drill-sergeant persona, keeping order in the cemetery's ghost community. Elvis Presley's figurine levitating before *Frighteners* character Ray Lynskey creates an in-joke because the actor, Peter Dobson, played Elvis Presley in (*Frighteners* executive producer) Robert Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump*. Jackson's selection of local actors constitutes further pastiche because many are easily recognised from New Zealand film and television roles (including Jackson's previous films). International stars Michael J. Fox and Trini Alvarado, local actors from *Shortland Street* and familiar *Braindead* or *Heavenly Creatures* actors (Stuart Devenie and Melanie Lynskey) combine to produce three layers of parody. For international audiences of American genre films, the Hollywood stars (and composer Danny Elfman, who wrote distinctive soundtracks for *Batman* and *Edward Scissorhands*) bring particular resonances; for New Zealand audiences, and those familiar with Jackson's oeuvre, two further levels of associations evoke different kinds of identifications and empathies with the characters.

This layered pastiche of images and verbal puns—actors invoking other films, reprising characters or playing against type, the use of in-jokes and friends' names—creates a palimpsestic texture of homage that connects *The Frighteners* to Jackson's oeuvre and to numerous American genre films. The textual layers reflect the double influences of Jackson's auteur signature and the film's transnational production agreement. When Laurence Simmons (1996: 24) asked, 'Is [*The Frighteners*] really a Hollywood movie or does it feel like one of your home-grown versions?', Peter Jackson replied:

I think that the actual finished movie feels more like an independent movie than a Hollywood film. It has the trappings of a Hollywood film—American actors and an American setting—but it doesn't feel like a film Hollywood would make. I didn't feel I was making an American movie by shooting it in New Zealand with a local crew who I had worked with before, shooting in familiar locations. Really, having a parade of Americans in front of the cameras was the only thing that felt a little different.

Simmons presupposes that a delineation between 'Hollywood' and 'homegrown' can be found, particularly in discussing Jackson's work; Jackson qualifies his rejection of the description 'Hollywood' by referring to his film as 'independent', describing a stylistic tone to the production without establishing the film's nationality. To Jackson, the 'parade' of Hollywood actors and an American setting function as stylistic variables in the film's design, and the suggestion that *The Frighteners* expresses a new Hollywood phase to Jackson's oeuvre is contraindicated by his use of local crew and familiar locations. Jackson (Simmons: 24) explains, '*The Frighteners* is not simply a formula film. It has a balance between comedy and horror which is something I have done before but it is not something Americans are used to'. In terms of genre combination and comedic tone, Jackson considers *The Frighteners* to be unlike a formulaic Hollywood production and more in keeping with his previous New Zealand films.

But although the pastiche of comedy/horror American film moments is characteristic of Jackson's work, the comparatively large budget and use of American mise-en-scène and actors are not. *The Frighteners* is a hybrid between Jackson's quirky parodies of pakeha identity myths and what New Zealand critics seem to consider its cultural antithesis, the Hollywood blockbuster. Whether this hybridity marks a liminal transition in Jackson's oeuvre to more Hollywood film making cannot be established until further films are made; nevertheless, *The Frighteners's* hybridity means it challenges received ideas about what constitutes a New Zealand film (and a New Zealand film maker) because Jackson has combined Hollywood and New Zealand film making in an unprecedented way to reap the financial, organisational and promotional benefits of a contract with Universal Pictures while maintaining and developing in New Zealand his individual film making style.

Not that kind of Universal Pictures: the spectre of cultural imperialism

Although many of Peter Jackson's cinematic constructions and thematic preoccupations recur in *The Frighteners*, the filmtext stands apart from Jackson's prior work because it looks and sounds like an American film. The capital invested by Universal Pictures in 1996 for *The Frighteners* included \$38million³ for production and \$15million for advertising and promotion (Campbell 1996b), with an estimated \$20million going directly into the Wellington economy (Campbell 1996a: 20).⁴ By contrast, total New Zealand feature film expenditure for 1996 was \$46million but only \$8.1million in 1997 (Wakefield 1998c); although the 1997 total was especially low and only half the expenditure of 1994 or 1995, the significant financial impact of *The Frighteners* on the domestic industry is clearly visible.⁵ As well as reaping the immediate benefits of an extraordinary budget, the capital injection enabled Jackson to develop skilled staff and facilities at WETA, his CGI unit which provided 570 special effects shots for *The Frighteners* at 'a mere \$18,000 per effects shot' compared to the '\$100-125,000 per shot routinely charged at the top United States special effects company Industrial Light and Magic' (Campbell 1996a: 21). After *The Frighteners* WETA continued to develop its market share, producing special effects on contract for others including Robert Zemeckis's film *Contact*. The comparison with George Lucas's company ILM exaggerates both the relative cheapness of WETA's work and the potential income to be made but the implication of Gordon Campbell's data is clear: Jackson has capitalised upon *The Frighteners* to develop talent and initiative at WETA which in turn provides financial gains from external contracts, develops the range of effects available for Jackson's own film making and means Jackson can offer a complete film making package, from his Miramar studios to the post-production integration of tailored special effects.

In contrast to the multi-million dollar budget for *The Frighteners*, NZFC can only part-fund a domestic film's budget; since some NZFC income derives from profits from the previous years' film investments (including overseas sales of film, video and television rights), NZFC funds are

³ Unless otherwise stated, all figures are reported in New Zealand dollars at dated value.

⁴ By contrast, *Bad Taste*'s \$200,000+ total was funded by Jackson's wages (\$17,000) and \$180,000 loaned by NZFC (Reid 1992); *Meet the Feebles* used \$450,000 from NZFC plus \$US150,000 from Japanese coinvestors and a budget overrun of \$250,000 (Bourke 1989; Bowron 1989); *Braindead* cost nearly \$3million (Baillie 1992) of which NZFC provided \$2million (McLennan 1992). *Heavenly Creatures* cost \$4.8million (Jackson 1998) and was jointly produced by WingNut Films, Senator (German investors) and NZFC; *Forgotten Silver* cost NZ On Air and NZFC \$620,000 in 1995 including a \$220,000 overrun (Chapple 1995). NZFC avoids listing the budgets per film since the amounts are development loans (that is, investments not grants) and returns and on-sales range from outstanding (*Once Were Warriors*) to abysmal (*Chicken*).

⁵ NZFC's funding in 1996 totalled \$13.5million including \$0.9m from government, \$8m from the Lottery Board, and \$4.6m from other sources including sales (NZFC 1996: 34).

subject to market fluctuations which subsequently increases the role of private investment in domestic film production. NZFC's ability to fund film making is contained by New Zealand's small population size which limits government or Lottery Board funding and potential domestic ticketsales; these constraints on NZFC funds mean larger, more expensive or riskier projects are not considered. Similarly, NZFC can only fund projects with 'significant New Zealand content',⁶ which requires coordinated compromise between the film maker's personal filmic vision and the need to appeal to both domestic New Zealand audiences (whose cultural cringe is often unpredictable) and international sales.

Juxtaposing *The Frighteners* with a typical NZFC feature with 'significant New Zealand content' and a maximum loan of \$1.8million (NZFC 1997b: 19) highlights the differences between Hollywood and New Zealand film making. Questions of cultural politics inevitably arise when Hollywood studios and small-budget New Zealand film makers collaborate. Discussions about who benefits from transnational cooperation have often stressed that an asymmetrical relationship in terms of resources, political power and market access can lead to cultural imperialism by the dominant party. American film making dominates the English-speaking (and some European) markets through economies of scale in production and promotion and through well-established networks of distribution and exhibition. But American dominance in the film and other cultural or economic markets is dynamic and does not represent a universal domination, a saturation or parasitism of a host culture as the critics of 'McDonalds culture' or 'Coca-Colonisation' might conclude. An appreciation of the historical and contemporary political, economic and social relationships between nations—what Geoff Lealand (1988: 22) terms 'empirical testing of experience'—is required in order to understand cultural products in context. The rhetorical oversimplification that suggests market penetration by Hollywood film products necessarily represents cultural imperialism needs revisiting if Peter Jackson's role as New Zealand film maker is to be understood.

Lealand draws heavily from Roger Horrocks (1985) and Nicholas Reid (1986) whose articles were positioned by concerns for domestic film making in New Zealand once industry-sustaining tax benefits removed in the 1982 Budget expired in 1984 and 1985. As Horrocks (1985: 156) noted, 'film-making is a very expensive medium, and the audience that has been developed still falls far short of the required base'; with a small economic base New Zealand business and

⁶ 'Significant New Zealand content' is decided (NZFC 1997b: 12) according to a hierarchy of qualifications ranging in importance from 'nationalities and place of residence of producers, directors, screenwriters' and 'subject matter of the film, with particular regard to the current concerns and cultural values of New Zealand' to the less important 'sources of financing'.

industry were (and still are) unwilling if not unable to wholly sponsor New Zealand films particularly if no new tax incentives replace those lost in 1982 (but see below). Reid (1986: 13) concedes that the tax write-off system might have 'encouraged mediocre and financially unrewarding films' to be produced but that on balance, the investment shelters were a positive influence during an important early stage of the industry's development because 'at least the cameras were turning and the films were being made'. Reid and Horrocks both pondered the future of the New Zealand industry, exploring fears that New Zealand would become 'merely a "cheap backlot" for Hollywood' (Reid: 16) because loss of tax incentives could hinder local film makers' ability to raise funds. The resulting shift to transnational co-production might further disadvantage domestic film making because 'New Zealand investors [might be] persuaded to put up money for what seems a much safer bet than a purely indigenous project' (Horrocks: 157). At the time Horrocks and Reid were writing, Ronald Reagan's power in the USA was asserting itself in New Zealand (through pressure on the ANZUS defence alliance) and across the globe in military as well as economic terms. Thus, arguments against 'Hollywood backlot' industrial relations expressed deeper fears that transnational economic agreements with the United States would produce a greater degree of American hegemonic influence including cultural dominance with a corresponding loss of indigenous cultural production.

Since the mid-1980s, New Zealand domestic film making has been sustained largely through NZFC funding and private sponsorship but the attractiveness of investing in New Zealand film 'ha[s] changed significantly since the tax incentives were removed, and things are not nearly so advantageous to film investors (private sector investors) as pre incentives days' (NZFC 1998). One of NZFC's roles extends 'to certify[ing] a film as being a New Zealand film for the purposes of those provisions of the Income Tax Act [1994] applying to film investments' (NZFC 1997a: 30)⁷ which means that under certain conditions, NZFC can classify a foreign-resourced and foreign-made film as a 'New Zealand film' or as an 'official co-production' for tax purposes. This certification process is useful for the foreign film maker because 'NZ films... get better tax concessions than unofficial co-productions' (although 'official co-productions are treated in the same way as NZ films' (NZFC 1998)). The tax benefits of New Zealand film investment are 'not nearly so advantageous' post-1982 but as Geoff Churchman demonstrates, even a film without significant New Zealand content or official co-production status might benefit financially through NZFC tax certification. As Churchman (1997: 143) notes, one film which benefited from this tax-deductability arrangement was *The Frighteners*:

⁷ NZFC is empowered under Section E04 of the *Income Tax Act 1994*.

To ensure that it qualified as a New Zealand film, its production budget was reimbursed by a New Zealand investment group before completion of production. The deal was facilitated with a mandate from Universal by Gary Hannam of the Film Investment Corporation, specialists in film financing. The identity of the New Zealand investors remains a secret.⁸

Thus, depending on the accounting arrangements made, a film by Universal Pictures (or any other international studio) might qualify for tax status as a New Zealand film or as an official co-production. Assuming Churchman is correct and the 'secret investors' who benefit from the tax credit are 'a New Zealand investment group', then *The Frighteners* does not represent a tax resource or fiscal 'backlot' for Hollywood. Nevertheless, it is discouraging to see millions of dollars invested into the massive tax benefits of a Hollywood blockbuster instead of supporting domestic film making. It appears bitterly ironic that the NZFC—which receives paltry government funding—must certify *The Frighteners* and others as New Zealand films to create multimillion-dollar tax write-offs when that tax revenue might perhaps otherwise have increased NZFC's indigenous film making funds.

In this light, Peter Jackson's move to work with Universal Pictures reflects the gap between his ambitions for more extravagant film making and the domestic economy's inability to provide sufficient resources. Transnational financial collaboration has consistently played a part in sustaining the domestic film industry (including Jackson's *Meet The Feebles* and *Heavenly Creatures*). But *The Frighteners* differs from co-production deals where international investors typically supplement NZFC funds for indigenous films: *The Frighteners*'s budget is several times the \$3-5million more commonly spent on a New Zealand film, and the film does not tell a New Zealand story. *The Frighteners* also differs from international productions using New Zealand's location and personnel—either as a backdrop for a Hollywood film like *Willow* or for a multinational simulation of a New Zealand story, like *The Piano*—because the palimpsestic nature of the text reveals onscreen the hybrid mix between a New Zealand auteur and twenty years of his favourite American genre films.

Rather than embodying the cultural domination of New Zealand film making by Hollywood, *The Frighteners* expresses a new kind of co-production that straddles national borders to articulate Hollywood and New Zealand together. Culture, industry and nation do not express static, universally agreed referents but instead conveniently name groups of dynamic processes: the New Zealand film industry that Horrocks and Reid discussed was in transition and continues to undergo change across its strata. Although Hollywood dominates film globally, its effects on other cultures' filmic products and processes is not predestined: American influences

⁸ NZFC (1998) has confirmed that '*The Frighteners* has been officially certified as a NZ film'.

might be resisted, embraced, or reworked into unstable, synthesising bricolages from which a new understanding of the indigenous and the introduced cultures, and their intercultural relations, might emerge. The importance of *The Frighteners* in Jackson's oeuvre is not that it marks a shift away from his previous New Zealand-focussed concerns to a Hollywood-financed American narrative, but that Jackson perseveres with his stylistic preoccupations—the cinematic quirks and repeated themes which distinguish his filmtexts from others', including his penchant for black comedy and its intrinsic ambivalence.

Mimicry and inauthenticity

Opening in New Zealand cinemas on Boxing Day 1996, *The Frighteners* capitalised on media coverage received during production: Jackson had cleverly arranged for television reporters to interview him on the *Frighteners* set after the 'truth' about *Forgotten Silver* became public in November 1995, and the Christchurch *Press* had carried articles about location filming at Lyttelton (but gave few details about the film itself). Michael J. Fox's *Listener* interview with Gordon Campbell (1995) barely mentioned the film in progress; Hans Petrovic (1995a: 2) visited the Lyttelton set but discovered that,

everyone... is tight-lipped about the plot. [Trini Alvarado] says she has been sworn to secrecy by the makers, who fear someone will steal the storyline and come out with it first. As there is still lots of special-effects work to be done and 'The Frighteners' will not be released until well into next year, the producers' apparent paranoia is understandable.

Despite ongoing publicity during production, minimal information about the story had been circulated and the seeming contradictions between Jackson's earlier work and Canadian star Michael J. Fox acting in a lead role remained unresolved.

The promotional ambiguity piqued audiences' curiosity, mine included. I remember that my few preconceived ideas about *The Frighteners* were based on a limited knowledge of Jackson's oeuvre and media reports that the film had been shot locally. I was unprepared for a screen filled with American hearses driving on the 'wrong' side of the road in front of the scenic rounded hills and blue sea that was clearly Lyttelton harbour. As the film progressed, actors from *Shortland Street* spoke in American accents in the Lyttelton cemetery and the town's library became the Sheriff's office: my friend and I became confused, focussing on the incongruity of the details ('Was that a US Mail box? Isn't that the BNZ?') and becoming more distanced from the narrative. At a significant point in the plot (the police/FBI interrogation

scenes) we almost left the cinema because we had insufficient appreciation of the characters and narrative to see these scenes as anything other than contrived and slow. Our horizons of expectation had not prepared us for the cultural dislocation of the viewing experience: we felt uncomfortable and inexplicably foolish.

This personal experience is related here because it not only motivated my interest in Jackson's role as New Zealand film maker but it also necessarily colours my reading of *The Frighteners*. The incongruities of a plastic golden syrup bottle (New Zealand) in Lucy's cupboard ('United States') or a Milky-Bar chocolate wrapper (NZ) in Frank's car ('US') can be read as signs of the inauthenticity of the American setting for the film. Inauthenticities in the mise-en-scène represent more than the blurring of intercultural boundaries that William D. Routt (1996: 4) considers when he writes that '[c]ulture is not hermetic, not machine-tooled, not for sheep. Instead, culture is leaky, jumbled together, fit for rats and cockroaches. Culture is made up of conflicts and contradictions in tension, positions and viewpoints are in constant motion'. *The Frighteners* borrows signifiers, images and moments from American film and reconstructs them in a New Zealand environment but fails to erase the 'conflicts and contradictions' that the two influences bring. The visible and audible discord between indigenous and Hollywood influences represents a cultural mingling beyond the 'leaky' boundaries or 'jumbled together' signifiers and suggests instead a transcultural tactic which is both contrived and ambivalent—a cultural form of mimicry.

According to Homi Bhabha's critique of British imperial dominance in India, the cultural functions that define and denote English imperial authority are replicated and mimicked—but not perfectly copied—by the Anglicized subordinate population to produce an ambivalent, ironic displacement of the discourses of government and power. In Bhabha's (1994: 88) view, mimicry holds 'menace' for the colonial power because the ambivalent partial imitation removes the controlling subject's discursive authority, allowing the 'hybrid' a 'metonymy of presence', or partial presence. Clearly, the imperial relations between English subject and Indian object—relations of colour, caste, class, language, gender—are incommensurable with the single consensual transnational film making agreement between Universal Pictures and Peter Jackson, but if Bhabha's analyses are conceptualised as culturally symbolic allegory, then the mimicry visible and audible onscreen in *The Frighteners* might be understood to express and to subvert the asymmetrical discursive relations between Hollywood and New Zealand film making. In terms of national cinema, Jackson's mimicry of Hollywood's discursive power reconfigures the

relations of representation that were predicated on difference, authenticity, and an organic sense of national film making because *The Frighteners* 'repeatedly resists' a closed, unified national signification (Bhabha 88). If Jackson can successfully mimic (as well as pastiche and parody) the signs of Hollywood films then Hollywood's discursive dominance can also be replicated and undermined.

But unlike the mimic men of Bhabha's discussion who 'desire to emerge as "authentic" through mimicry' (88), the hybridity of cultural representations in Jackson's film openly exposes and explores the ruptures between the two discourses. And unlike other New Zealand film makers in Hollywood who become 'mimics' and make 'authentic' American films, Peter Jackson has created a palimpsestic text—a text overwritten with another text—that refuses to relinquish its dyadic origins. Although *The Frighteners* appears to express the ambivalence and metonymy of presence that Bhabha theorised mimicry brings, its mimicry bears only a partial menace because unlike the reinscription of an imperial culture upon the body of the Anglicised colonial, the film's doubled text or palimpsestic nature is only visible to members of the subordinate culture—that is, the film's New Zealand viewers.⁹ To American critics,¹⁰ the film appears to situate a Hollywood story within an American setting and landscape: the imitation of Americanness was sufficiently 'authentic' to convince viewers in the United States that *The Frighteners* was an American-set Hollywood film.

The Frighteners connects the signs of a New Zealand film with the signs of an American film; the result is a textual ambivalence that can only authenticate one source: Peter Jackson. Making his film in New Zealand, Jackson mimics the signs of Hollywood film making in a manner that confounds New Zealand audiences' expectations of a blockbuster but might reward their expectations of familiar, local Jacksonesque black comedy. *The Frighteners*'s partial mimicry fails to perfectly replicate the signs of Hollywood film making but in exposing its New Zealand influences, the film expresses a form of mimicry different to that theorised by Bhabha and holds a new, different menace for the dominant partner. By creating an inauthentic Hollywood film which retains a New Zealand flavour for New Zealand audiences, Peter Jackson constructs an ambivalent parody and satire of mainstream American film. Rather than reflect cultural

⁹ New Zealand reviewer 'Kelly' (1997) wrote for *NZine*: 'Although "The Frighteners" has a Hollywood producer... and features some reasonably well known American actors, it still looks like a New Zealand film. The audience can play Spot the Shortland Street Character very successfully (there's Julia Thornton, and Rachel, and Bruce Warner...), and there are lots of panoramic shots of Lyttelton harbour masquerading quite convincingly as the fictitious American town of 'Fairwater'. The New Zealand influence makes it interesting for locals to watch, but the plot is dominated by Hollywood formula.'

¹⁰ Michael Price (1996) said in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, 'The shooting locale is New Zealand, Jackson's turf, standing in convincingly for Northern California'.

imperialism or backlot exploitation by a Hollywood studio, *The Frighteners* expresses a new space for subverting the discursive hegemony of Hollywood films. In this regard, *The Frighteners* joins *Bad Taste*, *Meet The Feebles*, *Braindead*, *Heavenly Creatures* and *Forgotten Silver* as a definitively Jacksonesque New Zealand-flavoured parody and satire of filmic and cultural expectations.

CONCLUSION

PETER JACKSON: A NEW ZEALAND FILM AUTEUR

Peter Jackson's oeuvre from *Bad Taste* to *The Frighteners* encompasses considerable variety: such a conclusion is transparently obvious. Peter Jackson's oeuvre also expresses significant consistency despite its heterogeneity: that conclusion requires elaboration. Jackson's films, although diverse, cohere in regular and predictable ways; cinematic flights of fancy and thematic variations on the battle between good and evil recur, producing a consistent visual style and recognisable narrative structure. But he is not an *auteur* in the *Cahiers du Cinéma* sense because his distinguishing characteristic is not his indisputable artistic genius; nor is Jackson an 'auteur' in Peter Wollen's terms because his oeuvre does not rework a binarism like the 'garden versus wilderness' structure Wollen found in John Ford's films. Jackson's oeuvre is distinctive because it articulates black humour with (predominantly) pakeha culture, mixing *Monty Pythonesque* aesthetic parody and American genre film moments with satires of New Zealand characters and social mores.

Bad Taste's pakeha masculinity parodies Hollywood action heroes and Kiwi-bloke attitudes to work and mateship through Jackson's splatstick comedy; *Meet The Feebles's* politically ambivalent grotesque caricatures satirises Hollywood musicals and high-brow notions of New Zealand culture. *Braindead's* excessive blood'n'guts climax signals the violent and simultaneous demise of zombie movies and Kiwiana kitsch nostalgia; and while *Heavenly Creatures* is more tragedy than comedy, the girls' Hollywood-inspired dream-world is realised as a fantastic mockery of, and escape from, the narrowly prescriptive social values of a small New Zealand city. *Forgotten Silver* creates a parodic pastiche of historic film moments to satirise both the global plethora of cinema centenaries and local myths of kiwi ingenuity to ambivalently deconstruct/recuperate the hero status of the straight pakeha male film maker. *The Frighteners* as a text retains traces of Jackson's cinematic and thematic preferences, his black comedy and familiar New Zealand settings, to mimic rather than to make a Hollywood film; as a cultural product the film exposes honestly the transnational industrial hybridity of its production process and is all the more an accurate expression of film making in New Zealand because of it.

Auteurism and national cinema were (and still are) extremely difficult to define: from the inchoate debates in *Cahiers du Cinéma* about the role and characteristics of the *auteur* to the present-day discussions of *The Piano* as a New Zealand film, the only certainty is the debates' intellectual dynamism and diversity. The terms might appear incompatible—auteurism emphasises the individual, the textual and the stylistic whereas national cinema considers the bonds of culture, politics, industry, landscape and language (and an inevitable relationship to Hollywood)—but these concepts overlap, as Jackson's oeuvre demonstrates. Similarly, academic study of it reveals previously unrecognized (or underrecognized) connections between two indispensable but apparently contradictory filmic modes, auteurism and national cinema.

For his next project, Jackson will direct J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as a trilogy, spending \$260million (\$US130m in 1998 terms) from New Line Cinema on 65 speaking roles, 15,000 extras and 300 full-time crew; of the dozens of staff to be employed on location shoots throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, at Jackson's Camperdown Studios and new Stone Street complex, and in completing 1200 CGIs in post-production at Weta Digital (Williams 1998), Jackson expects that 'almost all [the people involved] will be New Zealanders' (Simon Beattie and NZPA 1998). Jackson's use of Hollywood money—30 times the \$8million NZFC spent on feature film making last year (Calder 1998)—was criticised by film lecturer Keith Beattie (NZPA 1998a) who described Jackson as 'basically the maker of "Hollywood" films' whereas Beattie favoured 'strengthening guidelines to prescribe the level of involvement of New Zealanders in film ventures from overseas'. In response, Jackson said that Beattie was 'implying a threat [to domestic cinema] and I don't quite understand what the threat is' (NZPA 1998b). Beattie's ('Morning Report' 1998) view reflects the anxieties expressed in the 1980s that New Zealand film makers' collaborating with Hollywood somehow necessarily reduces opportunities for a (mythical) pure indigenous cinema; he asked 'how many of us know?' when a seemingly American film has been shot more cheaply in Canada, and used the oft-cited comparison that the television shows *Hercules*¹ and *Xena* use backgrounds in a manner that makes them 'no longer identifiable' as Aotearoa New Zealand landscapes. NZFC Chief Executive Officer Ruth Harley ('Morning Report' 1998) discussed Beattie's concerns with him but concluded that while she would 'totally agree that New Zealanders need to tell their own stories' she could nevertheless 'see no danger' in Jackson's financial arrangements but instead saw the potential for his *Rings* trilogy to 'put "industry" into "film industry"' in this country.

¹ *Hercules* reportedly spent \$17million here in its first five episodes in 1994 (*Onfilm* May: 12).

As well as offering an industrial opportunity to encourage film making in New Zealand, the deal struck for *The Lord of the Rings* enables Jackson to develop as a New Zealand auteur. Jackson's cinematic use of the Aotearoa New Zealand landscapes to evoke fantasy realms will inevitably connect *The Lord of the Rings* to *Bad Taste*, *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Frighteners*. Descriptions of massive fight scenes requiring 15,000 extras in bush country recall both Colin McKenzie's ill-fated *Salome* project (in *Forgotten Silver*) and the large-scale fantasy battles found in every Jackson film. Jackson's oeuvre—populated by unreal yet convincing aliens, Feebles, zombies, Borovnians and ghostly spirits—will easily accommodate among its characterisations the fantastic creatures required by Tolkien's novels. Simon Beattie (1998) also notes that Jackson might appear 'in a cameo as a goblin or troll'; even without reading a script or viewing the storyboard I can imagine the settings and stylistic devices which will connect Jackson's next New Zealand film project to his current oeuvre.

If Peter Jackson had succumbed to the 'tempt[ation] to quit New Zealand and make his films in the United States' (Dominion 1998)² then his varied and distinctive oeuvre would take a new turn, and this project would come to an end. But since Jackson will continue to make films in New Zealand this study represents part of a work in progress. Jackson's oeuvre contains many diverse elements which challenge prescriptive notions of auteurism and New Zealand film making; utilising his peculiar cinematic style to film another author's text will further challenge the discursive bounds of auteur theory, while the technical, cultural and skill-developing impact that *The Lord of the Rings* can potentially have on the domestic industry must be recognised as something more complex and more positive than a theoretical witless servility to Hollywood domination. Peter Jackson's importance as a New Zealand auteur—beyond his extraordinary commercial success and critical and popular acclaim—is his resistance of narrow aesthetic and cultural expectations through his dark comedies about pakeha New Zealand social values.

² Simon Beattie (1998) opens with the statement: 'Wellington film director Peter Jackson says he "came very, very close" to leaving New Zealand to make films in the United States'.

PLOT SYNOPSES

Bad Taste (1988)

'The Boys'—Frank, Ozzie, Barry and Derek—arrive in Kaihoro to investigate an emergency call. The seaside town is deserted except for hungry aliens. After a fight, Derek falls from a cliff onto rocks; Robert, his alien captive, escapes. Meanwhile Giles arrives to collect charity envelopes. Chased by Robert, Giles escapes to a large colonial house (the alien ship) only to be met by Reg, the aliens' cook, who marinades him for Lord Crumb's feast. The Boys undertake a Commando-style raid to rescue Giles, and a lengthy battle ensues. The aliens abandon their human disguise but soon lose the fight. After Robert is killed, Lord Crumb prepares the house-ship for take-off, unaware Derek has recovered and is onboard. Derek finishes Lord Crumb with his chainsaw as the houseship hurtles through space to the aliens' home, Nailic Nod.

Meet The Feebles (1989)

The live television premiere of *The Feebles Variety Hour* begins in twelve hours but no-one is ready. Heidi discovers Bletch, the show's producer and her lover, with Samantha and seeks refuge in gateaux; Robert arrives, new to the chorus, and falls in love with the equally naive Lucille. Various seedy and grotesque events occur around them, and several characters experience setbacks during rehearsals. Sebastian, the director, begs Bletch to reinstate his 'Sodomy' routine. Finally, the show begins but several items have been cancelled. Heidi's opening number is a success because she believes Bletch loves her, but when she discovers his lie, she takes revenge, machine-gunning Samantha, other Feebles, the audience and, finally, Bletch.

Braindead (1992)

Lionel Cosgrove unwittingly fulfils a prophecy told to Paquita and their romance begins. Lionel's mother Vera follows them to Wellington zoo; Vera is bitten by a vicious Sumatran Rat Monkey. Next day, Vera becomes increasingly unwell; Paquita calls Nurse McTavish but Vera dies, quickly reviving as a zombie. Lionel struggles to keep a growing number of zombies contained with animal tranquillisers. During Uncle Les's party, zombies escape from the cellar and infect the guests; soon, only a handful of humans remain. Lionel uses his lawnmower to massacre the zombies, and a talisman against his zombie mother. Paquita and Lionel defeat the zombies and stroll off together to a new life.

Heavenly Creatures (1994)

Pauline Rieper and Juliet Hulme transcend the differences between their class backgrounds to develop a devoted friendship founded on vivid imagination, artistic talent and similar histories of childhood illnesses. During Juliet's hospitalisation, she and Pauline develop their Borovnian fantasy stories by correspondence, often assuming their characters' names and points of view.

Later, when told that Juliet must leave, Pauline's mood darkens toward Mrs Rieper but her friendship with Juliet intensifies. As the date of separation looms, the girls lure Pauline's mother to Victoria Park, where they bash her to death with a half-brick in a stocking.

(Although they lived as husband and wife, Herbert and Honora Rieper were subsequently discovered to be unmarried; after her death, Honora was usually referred to as Mrs Parker, and Pauline was charged by police under her mother's maiden name. However, as *Heavenly Creatures* ends with Honora's death, she and Pauline are both named Rieper throughout the film.)

Forgotten Silver (1995) dirs. Peter Jackson and Costa Botes

Purporting to uncover forgotten New Zealand pioneer film making genius Colin McKenzie, this film mocks documentary codes to parody early film making and to satirise founding myths of Kiwi ingenuity. Colin McKenzie's narrated biography is interspersed with comments from authorities (Jackson, Botes, Weinstein, Hannah McKenzie) and samples of McKenzie's film work. The film culminates in a screening of McKenzie's epic *Salome* to a rapturous audience.

All the details of Colin McKenzie's life are falsified, many reworking and parodying existing early film sources; however, when *Forgotten Silver* first screened, many viewers understood it to be a documentary, not a parody, and the film was heavily criticised for 'hoaxing' the public.

The Frighteners (1996)

Frank Bannister, Fairwater's scamming 'ghostbuster' who can communicate with spirits after a traumatic car crash, becomes the prime suspect in a series of unexplained deaths. His ghostly friends fear the culprit is the mythic 'Soul Collector' but Frank discovers—during an out-of-body experience facilitated by Dr Lucy Lynskey—that executed serial killer Johnny Bartlett and his living girlfriend Patricia Bradley are collaborating in the murders. While racing to get Johnny's ashes to holy ground, Frank and Lucy are chased by FBI agent Dammers (who suspects Frank) and Patricia (who wants to kill them). Johnny and Patricia are consigned to hell and Frank puts aside his five years of grief and guilt to start a new life with Lucy.

FILMOGRAPHY

Primary texts

<i>Bad Taste</i>	(dir. Peter Jackson, 1988)
<i>Meet The Feebles</i>	(dir. Peter Jackson, 1989)
<i>Braindead</i>	(dir. Peter Jackson, 1992)
<i>Heavenly Creatures</i>	(dir. Peter Jackson, 1994)
<i>Forgotten Silver</i>	(dirs. Peter Jackson and Costa Botes, 1995)
<i>The Frighteners</i>	(dir. Peter Jackson, 1996)

Secondary texts

<i>Abyss, The</i>	(dir. James Cameron, 1989)
<i>Alexander Nevsky</i>	(dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1938)
<i>Balloonatic, The</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1923)
<i>Batman</i>	(dir. Tim Burton, 1989)
<i>Battleship Potemkin</i>	(dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1925)
<i>Birth of a Nation, The</i>	(dir. D.W. Griffith, 1915)
<i>Bladerunner</i>	(dir. Ridley Scott, 1982)
<i>Bonnie and Clyde</i>	(dir. Arthur Penn, 1967)
<i>Came a Hot Friday</i>	(dir. Ian Mune, 1984)
<i>Carrie</i>	(dir. Brian De Palma, 1976)
<i>Chicken</i>	(dir. Grant Lahood, 1996)
<i>Cinema of Unease</i>	(dirs. Sam Neill and Judy Rymer, 1995)
<i>Citizen Kane</i>	(dir. Orson Welles, 1941)
<i>Contact</i>	(dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1997)
<i>Deer Hunter, The</i>	(dir. Michael Cimino, 1978)
<i>Déjeuner de Bébé</i>	(dir. Louis Lumière, 1895)
<i>Desperate Remedies</i>	(dirs. Stewart Main and Peter Wells, 1993)
<i>Down on the Farm</i>	(dir. Lee Hill, 1935)
<i>Edge, The</i>	(dir. Lee Tamahori, 1997)
<i>Edward Scissorhands</i>	(dir. Tim Burton, 1990)
<i>8 1/2</i>	(dir. Federico Fellini, 1963)
<i>E.T. The Extraterrestrial</i>	(dir. Steven Spielberg, 1982)
<i>Evil Dead</i>	(dir. Sam Raimi, 1982)
<i>Evil Dead 2</i>	(dir. Sam Raimi, 1987)
<i>Forrest Gump</i>	(dir. Robert Zemeckis, 1994)
<i>Full Metal Jacket</i>	(dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1987)
<i>General, The</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1926)
<i>Ghost</i>	(dir. Jerry Zucker, 1990)
<i>Ghostbusters</i>	(dir. Ivan Reitman, 1984)
<i>Good Taste Made Bad Taste</i>	(dir. Tony Hiles, 1988)
<i>Good-bye Pork Pie</i>	(dir. Geoff Murphy, 1980)
<i>Great Train Robbery, The</i>	(dir. Edwin S. Porter, 1903)
<i>Gremlins</i>	(dir. Joe Dante, 1984)
<i>Howling, The</i>	(dir. Joe Dante, 1980)
<i>Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom</i>	(dir. Steven Spielberg, 1989)
<i>Ivan The Terrible Part One</i>	(dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1944)
<i>Ivan The Terrible Part Two</i>	(dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1945)

<i>King Kong</i>	(dir. Merian C. Cooper, 1933)
<i>Mauri</i>	(dir. Merata Mita, 1989)
<i>Monty Python's The Meaning of Life</i>	(dir. Terry Jones, 1983)
<i>Mulholland Falls</i>	(dir. Lee Tamahori, 1996)
<i>Natural Born Killers</i>	(dir. Oliver Stone, 1994)
<i>Neighbours</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1920)
<i>Ngati</i>	(dir. Barry Barclay, 1987)
<i>Night of the Living Dead</i>	(dir. George Romero, 1968)
<i>Once Were Warriors</i>	(dir. Lee Tamahori, 1993)
<i>Other Halves</i>	(dir. John Laing, 1984)
<i>Our Hospitality</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1923)
<i>Patu!</i>	(dir. Merata Mita, 1982)
<i>Piano, The</i>	(dir. Jane Campion, 1993)
<i>Rambo, First Blood</i>	(dir. Ted Kotcheff, 1982)
<i>Re-Animator</i>	(dir. Stuart Gordon, 1985)
<i>Rope</i>	(dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1948)
<i>Seven Chances</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1925)
<i>Sherlock Jnr</i>	(dir. Buster Keaton, 1924)
<i>Shining, The</i>	(dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980)
<i>Sleeping Dogs</i>	(dir. Roger Donaldson, 1977)
<i>Stalin's Sickle</i>	(dir. Costa Botes, 1987)
<i>Swoon</i>	(dir. Tom Kalin, 1992)
<i>Terminator 2: Judgment Day</i>	(dir. James Cameron, 1991)
<i>Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The</i>	(dir. Tobe Hooper, 1974)
<i>Third Man, The</i>	(dir. Carol Reed, 1949)
<i>Touch of Evil</i>	(dir. Orson Welles, 1958)
<i>Triumph of the Will</i>	(dir. Leni Riefenstahl, 1936)
<i>Tusalava</i>	(dir. Len Lye, 1928)
<i>Valley of the Stereos</i>	(dir. George Port, 1992)
<i>Willow</i>	(dir. Ron Howard, 1988)
<i>Wolf Man, The</i>	(dir. George Waggner, 1941)
<i>Zombies - Dawn of the Dead</i>	(dir. George Romero, 1978)

REFERENCES

- Adair, Gilbert. 1989. *Hollywood's Vietnam: From The Green Berets to Full Metal Jacket*. London: Heinemann.
- Anderson, Robyn. 1997. 'Staking a Claim'. *Onfilm* November: 10.
- Andrew, Dudley. 1993. 'The Unauthorized Auteur Today' in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins, eds. *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*. New York and London: Routledge. 77-85.
- Astruc, Alexandre. 1968. 'The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: Le Caméra-Style' (1948), reprinted in Peter Graham, trans. and ed., *The New Wave*. London: Secker and Warburg. 17-23.
- Atkinson, Michael. 1995. 'Earthy Creatures'. *Film Comment* May: 31-7.
- Baillie, Russell. 1992. 'Screaming With Laughter'. *Press* 2 August: Supp. 3.
- Balio, Tino. 1996. 'Adjusting to the New Global Economy: Hollywood in the 1990s', in Albert Moran, ed. 23-38.
- Barclay, Barry. 1990. *Our Own Image*. Auckland: Longman Paul.
- Barnouw, Erik. 1974. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barr, Jim and Mary Barr. 1996. 'NZFX' in Dennis, Jonathan and Jan Bieringa, eds. 150-160.
- Barthes, Roland. 1977. 'The Death of the Author' (1968) in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang. 142-8.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1992. 'From Simulations' (1983), in Easthope, Anthony and Kate McGowan, eds. *A Critical and Cultural Theory Reader*. Buckingham: Open University Press. 203-5.
- Bazin, André. 1985. 'On the *Politique des Auteurs*' (1957) trans. Peter Graham, in Jim Hillier, ed., *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 248-259.
- Beattie, Keith. 1996. 'Maori Independent Documentary Film and Videomakers: An Annotated Bibliography of Sources'. *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies* 3 (2): 50-60.
- Beattie, Simon. 1998. 'Tolkien Project Keeps Jackson Home'. *Evening Post* 26 August: 3.
- Beattie, Simon and NZPA. 1998. 'Jackson Lands \$264m Film Deal'. *Evening Post* 25 August: 1.
- Bell, Claudia. 1996. *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity*. Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Bowron, Jane. 1989. 'Filmmaker Introduces Puppets to Adult World'. *Dominion* 9 August: 13.
- Botes, Costa. 1992a. 'Braindead a Riotously Funny Eye-Popper'. *Dominion* 17 August: 16.
- _____. 1992b. 'Contents Dictated by "Political Correctness"'. *Onfilm* August: 11.
- _____. 1995. 'Making New Film Look Old'. *Onfilm* December: 4.
- Bourke, Chris. 1989. 'Gargoyle Features'. *Listener* 22 July: 68-9.
- Broms, Jorgen. 1993. 'Interview With Peter Jackson'. First published in *Eskilstuna-Kuiren*. <http://www.wp.com/traciinheaven/peter.html>
- Bryant, Rick. 1995. 'One Uneasy Piece'. *Metro* December: 64-5.
- Buscombe, Edward. 1981. 'Ideas of Authorship' (1973) in John Caughie, ed. 22-34.
- Cairns, Barbara and Helen Martin. 1994. *Shadows on the Wall: a Study of Seven New Zealand Feature Films*. Auckland: Longman Paul.
- Calder, Angus. 1996. 'Language, Empire and the "Home Colonies"'. *SPAN* 42/43 April and October: 1-14.
- Calder, Peter. 1993. 'To Moider Mother'. *New Zealand Herald* 15 April. Section 2: 1.
- _____. 1994. 'Heaven Sent'. *New Zealand Herald* 14 October. Section 2:1.
- _____. 1998. 'Rich Movie Reward More Than We Deserve'. *New Zealand Herald* 26 August: A18.
- Campbell, Gordon. 1995. 'Michael J. Fox Talks Kiwi'. *Listener* 2 December: 18-20.
- _____. 1996a. 'Hobnobbing in Hollywood'. *Listener* 3 August: 20-1.
- _____. 1996b. 'Scare Tactics'. *Listener* 30 November: 25.
- _____. 1997. 'Monkey Business'. *Listener* 1 February: 21.

- Campbell, Russell. 1995. 'Dismembering the Kiwi Bloke: Representations of Masculinity in *Braindead*, *Desperate Remedies* and *The Piano*'. *Illusions* 24: 2-9.
- Caughie, John, ed. 1981. *Theories of Authorship*. London, Boston and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, in association with the British Film Institute.
- Caughie, John with Kevin Rockett. 1996. *The Companion to British and Irish Cinema*. London: Cassell and BFI.
- Chapman, Graham, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones and Michael Palin. 1989. *The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus: All The Words Volume II*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Chapple, Geoff. 1995. 'Gone, Not Forgotten'. *Listener* 25 November: 26.
- Chrisman, Laura. 1997. 'Questioning Robert Young's Postcolonial Criticism'. *Textual Practice* 11 (1): 39-46.
- Churchman, Geoff. 1997. *Celluloid Dreams: A Century of Film in New Zealand*. Wellington: IPL Books.
- Cook, David A. 1996. *A History of Narrative Film*. 3rd edition. New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co.
- Cooke, Chris. 1997a. 'Pauline Found After 42 years'. *NZ Woman's Weekly* 6 January: 3.
- _____. 1997b. 'Whatever Happened to Pauline Parker?' *NZ Woman's Weekly* 13 January: 3-5.
- _____. 1997c. 'How I Found Pauline'. *NZ Woman's Weekly* 13 January: 5.
- _____. 1997d. 'Their Dark Friendship'. *NZ Woman's Weekly* 13 January: 6-7.
- Corrigan, Timothy. 1991. *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Courtney, Bernadette. 1996a. 'Jackson Films Promote Local Talent'. *Dominion* 26 June: 11.
- Creed, Barbara. 1996. 'Heavenly Creatures'. *Midwest Ten*: 20.
- Crockett, Mary. 1995a. 'Gumboots and All'. *Listener* 9 September: 40.
- Cusdin, Michael. 1998. *Watching the Savages Dance* (thesis). Christchurch: University of Canterbury.
- Danielsen, Shane. 1989. 'Mutated Muppets'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. Sydney, in Greycat Films.
- Dennis, Jonathan and Jan Bieringa, eds. 1996. *Film in Aotearoa New Zealand*. 2nd ed. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Dixon, Greg. 1995. 'Pioneer of Film was Mythical: TVNZ Went Along With Ruse'. *New Zealand Herald* 31 October. Section 1: 2.
- Dominion. 1998. 'Wellywood on its Way' (editorial). *Dominion* August 27: 10.
- Downing, John D.H., ed. 1987. *Film and Politics in the Third World*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Espiner, Guyon. 1997. 'Movie Meister'. *Evening Post* 6 December: 7, 10.
- Feuer, Jane. 1986. 'The Self-Reflexive Musical and the Myth of Entertainment', in Grant, Barry Keith, ed., *Film Genre Reader*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 329-343.
- _____. 1993. *The Hollywood Musical*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Ford, Graham. 1987. '21 Years of Gentle Fossicking'. *Listener* 4 April: 20-1.
- Forster, Michelanne. 1992. *Daughters of Heaven*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1984. 'What is an Author?' (1969), trans. Josué V. Harari, in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Glamuzina, Julie and Alison J. Laurie. 1991. *Parker and Hulme: a Lesbian View*. Auckland: New Women's Press.
- Goldson, Annie. 1997. 'Piano Recital'. *Screen* 38 (3): 275-281.
- Greycat Films. 1995. 'Meet The Feebles' press kit. Las Vegas: Greycat Films
- Grieverson, Lynn. 1992. 'Braindead a Hot Seller'. *Waikato Times* 15 July, in WingNut Films 1992.
- Hall, Roger. 1977. *Glide Time: A Play in Four Acts Set in the Public Service*. Wellington: Price Milburn for Victoria University Press.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. 'The Problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantees'. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge. 24-46.
- _____. 1993. 'Encoding, Decoding' (1990), in Simon During, ed., *The Cultural Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Hardy, Ann. 1993. 'Valhalla Aotearoa'. *Illusions* 21/22: 62-5.
- _____. 1997. 'Heavenly Creatures and Transcendental Style: A Literal Reading'. *Illusions* 26: 2-9.
- Hardy, Forsyth, ed. 1966. *Grierson on Documentary* (1946). London: Faber and Faber.
- _____. 1979. *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber.

- Harwood, Elizabeth H. 1995. *A Brick in a Stocking: Abject Desires in Heavenly Creatures* (thesis). Auckland: University of Auckland.
- Heath, Stephen. 1973. 'Comment on "The Idea of Authorship"'. *Screen* 14 (3):86-91.
- _____. 1981. *Questions of Cinema*. London: Macmillan.
- Hegan, Chris. 1990. 'Gross-Out Genius'. *Listener and TV Times* 15 October: 107.
- Hill, Robin. 1989. 'Meet The Feebles' (review). *On The Street* (Sydney) 27 March, in Greycat Films.
- Horrocks, Roger. 1985. 'Creating a Feature-Film Industry'. *Journal of Popular Culture* 19 (2): 149-158.
- _____. 1996. 'Alternatives: Experimental Film Making in New Zealand', in Dennis, Jonathan and Jan Bieringa, eds, 1996: 56-88.
- Horrocks, Shirley. 1998. *Kiwiana: Kiwi As! (Part Two)*. (Television show). TVNZ/ NZ On Air.
- Horton, Andrew, ed. 1997. *Buster Keaton's Sherlock Jr.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hulme, Keri. 1983. *the bone people*. Wellington: Spiral.
- Hunningher, Joost. 1996. 'Première on Regent Street' (1995), in Williams, Christopher, ed. 1996. *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future*. London: University of Westminster Press. 41-54.
- Jackson, Peter. 1997. 'It Was Close Enough, Jim'. *Onfilm* November: 20.
- _____. 1998. 'Morning Report' (interview), National Radio. 25 March.
- Jameson, Fredric. 1983. 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in Foster, Hal, ed., 1983. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. Port Townsend: Bay Press. 111-125.
- Jeffords, Susan. 1995. 'Friendly Civilians: Images of Women and the Feminization of the Audience in Vietnam War Films', in Grant, Barry Keith, ed., *Film Genre Reader II*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 428-440.
- Jones, Alan. 1996. 'Braindead'. *Midwest Ten*: 18.
- Jutel, Thierry. 1996. 'Peter Jackson and the Powers of the False: Against a Certain Tendency of New Zealand Cinema'. *Midwest Ten*: 22.
- Kael, Pauline. 1994. *I Lost it at the Movies: Film Writings 1954-65*. New York: Marion Boyars.
- 'Kelly'. 1997. 'The Frighteners' (review). *NZine*.
URL: <http://www.nzine.co.nz/reviews/frighteners.html>.
- King, Michael, ed. 1991. *Pakeha: The Quest for Identity in New Zealand*. Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Lapsley, Robert and Michael Westlake. 1988. *Film Theory: An Introduction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Laurie, Alison J. 1992. 'Daughter (W)rite 2'. *Illusions* 20: 24-5.
- Le Petit, Paul. 1989. 'New Comedy is no Regular Puppet Show'. *Sydney Sunday Telegraph*, in Greycat Films 1992.
- Lealand, Geoff. 1988. *A Foreign Egg in Our Nest? American Popular Culture in New Zealand*. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- 'Letters to the Editor'. 1990. *Listener and TV Times* 13 August: 50.
- _____. 1995. *Listener* 25 November: 12.
- Longuet, Adrienne. 1987. *Country Calendar*. Auckland: TVNZ Publishing.
- MacDonald, Finlay. 1997. 'Poppy Culture: Off With Our Heads'. *Listener* 25 October: 7.
- Martin, Helen and Sam Edwards. 1997. *New Zealand Film 1912-1996*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- McDonald, Lawrence. 1993. 'A Critique of the Judgement of Bad Taste, or Beyond Braindead Criticism'. *Illusions* 21/22: 10-5.
- McDonnell, Brian. 1992. 'Braindead' (review). *North and South* September: 125.
- _____. 1998. *Fresh Approaches to Film*. Auckland: Longman.
- McGill, David. 1989. *Kiwi Baby Boomers: Growing up in New Zealand in the 40s, 50s and 60s*. Lower Hutt: Mills.
- McLeod, Rosemary, and Steven O'Meagher. 1988. 'Burton Silver' in 'Funny People: The Serious Business of Raising a Laugh'. *North and South* December: 84.
- McLennan, Patrick. 1992. 'Laughing Through the Splatter'. *Dominion* 14 March: 11.
- Meadows, Michael. 1996. 'Speaking Out: Indigenous Film Policy Debates in Australia, New Zealand and Canada', in Albert Moran, ed. 262-274.
- Medlicott, R.W. 1979. 'Paranoia of the Exalted Type in a Setting of Folie à Deux: A Study of Two Adolescent Homicides' (1955), in Taylor, A.J.W. and W.A.M. Black, eds. *Deviant behaviour: New Zealand Studies*. Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books. 111-123.
- Meek, Allen. 1997. 'Transnational Mediascapes and National Cinema: Some Comments on Cinema of Unease'. *New Zealand Journal of Media Studies* 4 (2): 3-11.

- Mita, Merata. 1996. 'The Soul and the Image' in Dennis, Jonathan and Jan Bieringa, eds. 36-56.
- Mitchell, Austin. 1972. *The Half-Gallon Quarter-Acre Pavlova Paradise*. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs.
- Moran, Albert, ed. 1996. *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Morley, David. 1986. *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. London and New York: Routledge.
- 'Morning Report'. 1998. 'Ruth Harley and Keith Beattie' (interview discussion). National Radio 27 August.
- Morrieson, Ronald Hugh. 1964. *Came a Hot Friday*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson.
- Morris, Desmond. 1969. *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal*. London: Book Club Associates.
- Morris, Pam, ed. 1994. *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev and Voloshinov*. London, New York: E. Arnold.
- Mulvey, Laura. 1975. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18.
- Murray, Scott. 1994. 'Peter Jackson: Heavenly Creatures'. *Cinema Papers* 97/8 April: 20-4, 29-30.
- Musa, Mohammed. 1998. 'Cultural Imperialism and the Active Audience Thesis in Communication Studies'. Seminar, University of Canterbury Journalism School.
- Neale, Steve and Frank Krutnik. 1990. *Popular Film and Television Comedy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- New Zealand Film Commission *Te Tumu Whakaata Taonga* (NZFC). 1996. *Annual Report*.
 _____. 1997a. *Annual Report*.
 _____. 1997b. *Feature Film Development* (guidelines for application).
 _____. 1998. Personal email 12 August.
- New Zealand Press Association (NZPA). 1975a. 'Assault With Jam Pie'. *Press* 22 March: 1.
 _____. 1975b. 'Pie In The Eye'. *Press* 24 March: 14.
 _____. 1995. 'Film Hoax Develops in Secrecy'. *Dominion* 30 October: 3.
 _____. 1998a. 'Film Scoop Has Downside: Academic'. *New Zealand Herald* 27 August: A20.
 _____. 1998b. 'Academic's View Narrow, Says Jackson'. *Press* 28 August: 9.
- NZfilm. 1994. 'Miramax Buy World Rights to NZ Feature'. *NZfilm* 51, May: 4-5.
- Onfilm. 1992. 'Zombie Pic Set for Lively Profits'. *Onfilm* July: 5.
- Paatsch, Leigh. 1989. *In Press*. Melbourne, in Greycat Films.
- Parekowhai, Cushla. 1988. 'Kōrero ki taku Tuakana: Merata Mita and Me'. *Illusions* 9: 21-6.
- Parker, John. 1992. 'Splat'. *Metro* August: 141-2.
- Petrovic, Hans. 1992. 'Horror Used for a Chuckle'. *Press* 31 August: 6.
 _____. 1995a. 'Lights! Camera! Action!' *Press* 3 June: Supp 1-2.
 _____. 1995b. 'Television Viewers Disappointed by Revelation of Hoax Documentary'. *Press* October 31: 5.
- Press. 1954a. 'Murder Charge: Two Girls to Stand Trial'. *Press* 17 July: 8.
 _____. 1954b. 'Murder Charge: Two Girls on Trial in Supreme Court'. *Press* 24 August: 12.
 _____. 1954c. 'Murder Charge: Trial of Two Girls Continued'. *Press* 25 August: 12-3.
- Price, Michael H. 1996. "'Frighteners': Something Creepy This Way Comes". *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.
 URL: <http://www.chattimes.com/cityscape/diversions/filmfinder/frighteners.html>.
- Price, Simon. 1996. *New Zealand's First Talkies: Early Film-Making in Otago and Southland 1896-1939*. Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books.
- Pryor, Ian. 1990. 'Meet Your Creature Feature'. *Illusions* 13: 7-11.
 _____. 1992. 'Monster Talent'. *Listener and TV Times* 8 August: 44-7.
- Quinn, Karl. 1993. 'Braindead' (review). *Cinema Papers* 93, May: 43-4.
- Ralston, Bill. 1995. 'Hi Ho Silver: The Brainwaves of Burton'. *North and South* March: 60-7.
- Reid, Bronwen. 1992. 'Splattermeister'. *Time* 29 June, in WingNut Films 1992.
- Reid, Nicholas. 1986. *A Decade of New Zealand Film: Sleeping Dogs to Came a Hot Friday*. Dunedin: John McIndoe.
- Riley, Bob. 1995. *Kiwi Ingenuity*. Auckland: Auckland Institute of Technology Press.
- Rivette, Jacques. 1985. 'The Genius of Howard Hawks' (1953), trans. Russell Campbell and Marvin Pister, adapted from a translation by Adrian Brine, in Jim Hillier, ed. *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 126-131.
- Robinson, Rebecca. 1997a. 'As Seen on TV', unpublished BA Hons paper.

- _____. 1997b. 'Realising Inauthenticity: *Forgotten Silver*'. *Meridian* 16 (2): 205-217.
- Roscoe, Jane and Craig Hight. 1996. 'Silver Magic'. *Illusions* 25: 14-9.
- _____. 1997. 'Mocking Silver: Re-inventing the Documentary Project (or, Grierson Lies Bleeding)'. *Continuum* 11 (1): 67-82.
- Routt, Bill. 1996a. 'New Zealand Cinema', in Geoffrey Nowell-Smith ed. *The Oxford History of World Cinema: The Definitive History of Cinema Worldwide*. New York: Oxford University Press. 731.
- _____. 1996b. 'New Zealand Culture?' (1991). *Continuum* (Reading Room online journal) 4 (2): 1-6.
- Russell, Marcia. 1996. 'The Germ Turns'. *Metro March*: 118-9.
- Russell, Mark. 1997. 'Pushing the Film-Friendly Message'. *Evening Post* 20 June: 18.
- Ryan, P.M. 1983. *The Revised Dictionary of Modern Māori*. Auckland: Heinemann.
- Sarris, Andrew. 1968. *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Silver, Burton and Heather Busch. 1994. *Why Cats Paint: A Theory of Feline Aesthetics*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.
- Simmons, Laurence. 1996. 'Peter Jackson: "A Little Clunky and Manic."' *Midwest Ten*: 23.
- Sorrell, Alan. 1997. 'The Struggle to Retain Funding'. *Onfilm* November: 16.
- Spadoni, Robert. 1995. 'Geniuses of the System: Authorship and Evidence in Classical Hollywood Cinema'. *Film History* 7.4: 362-85.
- Stam, Robert. 1989. *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Stoddart, Helen. 1995. 'Auteurism and Film Authorship Today' in Hollows, Joanne and Mark Jancovich, eds., *Approaches to Popular Film*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 37-57.
- Swain, Pauline. 1995. 'Out of the Wilderness'. *Dominion* 26 October: 9.
- Taylor, Thomas. 1989. 'Doors Shut on Muppets'. *The Entertainment Age*, Sydney.
- Tierney, Mark. 1992. 'Braindead' (review). *Listener and TV Times* 8 August: 46-7.
- Tillis, Steve. 1992. *Toward an Aesthetic of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Truffaut, François. 1976. 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema' (1954), reprinted translation from Bill Nichols, ed. *Cahiers du Cinéma in English*, in *Movies and Methods* Volume 1. Berkeley: University of California Press. 224-237.
- _____. 1985. 'A Wonderful Certainty' (1955), trans. Liz Heron, in Jim Hillier, ed. *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 107-110.
- Universal Pictures. 1996. '*The Frighteners*' press kit. Los Angeles: Universal Pictures.
- 'Upfront' team. 1997. 'Pie Minister'. *Listener* 19 July: 12-3.
- Wakefield, Philip. 1995a. 'Sunday Theatre Shorts Short-Changed'. *Onfilm* May: 7.
- _____. 1995b. 'Forgotten Silver Mines Mother Lode of Bull'. *Onfilm* November: 4.
- _____. 1998. 'It's Official - We're in Recession'. *Onfilm* March: 1.
- Welch, Denis. 1995a. 'Heavenly Chance'. *Listener* 25 March: 33.
- _____. 1995b. 'Heavenly Features'. *Listener* 28 October: 31-2.
- Williams, H.W. 1992. *Dictionary of the Māori Language*. Wellington: GP Publications Ltd.
- Williams, Kim. 1998. 'Jackson Project May Give \$200m Boost to Economy'. *Dominion* 26 August: 1.
- WingNut Films. 1989. '*Bad Taste* press kit'. Wellington: WingNut Films.
- _____. 1992. '*Braindead* press kit'. Wellington: WingNut Films.
- _____. 1994. '*Heavenly Creatures* press kit'. Wellington: WingNut Films.
- _____. 1995. '*Forgotten Silver* press kit'. Wellington: WingNut Films.
- Wolfe, Richard. 1991. *Kiwi: More Than a Bird*. Auckland: Random Century.
- Wollen, Peter. 1969. *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*. London: Thames and Hudson in association with the British Film Institute.
- Young, Robert. 1997. 'Response to Laura Chrisman.' *Textual Practice* 11 (1): 47-50.